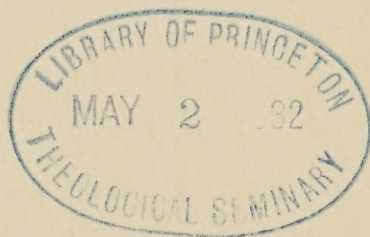


The
MAGIC FORMULA
& Other Stories

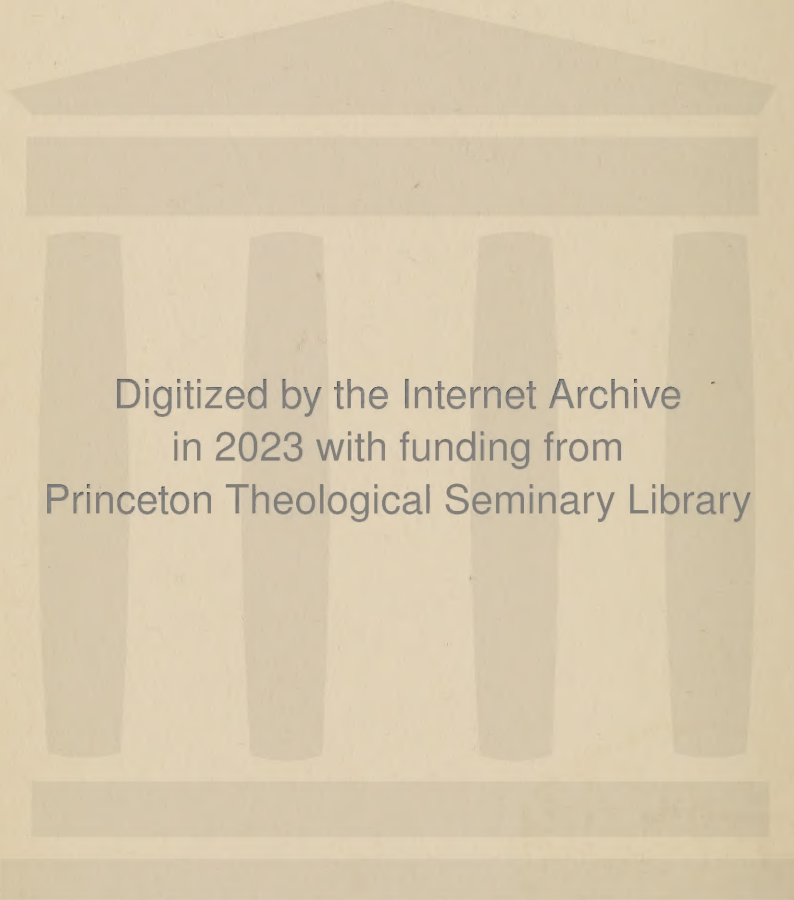


L. P. JACKS



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THE MAGIC FORMULA
and Other Stories



THE MAGIC FORMULA

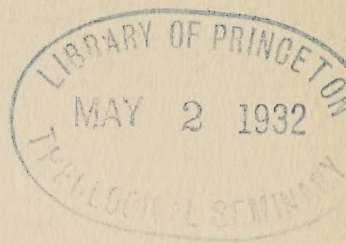
AND OTHER STORIES

BY
✓
L. P. JACKS

*Editor of
The Hibbert Journal*



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FIRST EDITION

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« P R E F A C E »

THE stories in this book are selected from a larger series published in five volumes by Messrs. Williams & Norgate, London. They are here republished with their consent and with that of Henry Holt, New York. The thanks of the author are offered for this permission.

In making this selection for American publication the author has chosen the stories which he thought most likely, or least unlikely, to have a human interest irrespective of time and place. Whether he has been right in this, or whether the stories have any human interest at all, is not for him to judge. He can only say that it was his interest in mankind that prompted him to write them. They are fictions, but in every instance they have facts for their growing points. So far as he can understand his own motives (which is not an easy thing for any man to do) the author in writing the stories was not concerned with any particular theory of human life, but only in depicting the strangeness of life as he has encountered it—though, of course, strangeness itself is a kind of theory. He makes

PREFACE

this statement because he has been often asked what this or that story "meant"; to which question he has sometimes been obliged to return the unsatisfactory answer that he does not know. Whether such ignorance becomes an author in presence of his own work the literary critic must be left to judge. He will probably agree that a story which the author has to explain is one which he would have been wiser not to write.

L. P. J.

April, 1927.

THE MAGIC FORMULA
and Other Stories



I

THE MAGIC FORMULA

I

MANY years ago I had a schoolfellow and bosom friend whom I knew as Billy, but whose name as it stood in the school register was William Xavier Plosive. Where his family came from, or where they got their outlandish name, I know not. From its rarity I infer that the Plosive stock has not multiplied lavishly on the earth. Only twice, since the days of my friendship with Billy, have I encountered that name. There is, or was, a wayside public-house in Devonshire, the landlord of which was a Plosive; it bore the sign of the "Dog and Ladle," which the signboard interpreted by a picture of a large retriever in precipitate flight with a tin ladle tied to his tail. The other Plosive of my acquaintance kept a shop in a Canadian city; he was a French half-breed and, as I have heard, a great rascal.

Billy's father was said to have been a Roman Catholic; and I infer from the name he bestowed

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on his son that he had a turn for waggishness of a sort. Plosive senior must have foreseen what would happen. No sooner, of course, was the name William X. Plosive seen on the outside of the poor boy's copybooks than a whisper passed through the whole school—"Billy Burst." And that name remained with him to the end. It was more appropriate than its bestowers knew.

"*When* did Billy burst?" "*Why* did Billy burst?" "Will Billy burst again?" and a hundred questions of the like order were asked all day long apropos of nothing. They were shouted in the playground. They were whispered in the class. They broke the silence of the dormitory in the dead of night. With them we relieved our pent-up feelings in hours of tedium or of gloom. Introduced *pianissimo*, they profaned the daily half-hour devoted to the study of Divinity. Innumerable impositions followed in their train. One morning the Rev. Cyril Puttock, M.A., who "took" us in Divinity, saw written large on the blackboard in front of him these words: "What burst Billy?" I spent my next half-holiday in writing out the Beatitudes a hundred times.

Billy and I slept in the same dormitory and our beds were side by side. Both of us were bad sleepers, and many a deep affinity did our souls discover in the silent watches of the night. As a place to observe the workings of telepathy I know of no spot on earth to compare with the dormitory of a board-

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ing-school. The atmosphere of our dormitory was, if I may say so, in a state of chronic telepathic saturation, and the area where the currents ran strongest was in the space between Billy's bed and mine. This is the sort of things that would go on:

"Billy, are you awake?"

"Yes; I knew *you* were."

"Shall we talk?"

"I want to, ever so."

"I say, we are going to have that beastly pudding for dinner to-morrow."

"That's just what I want to talk about."

"I've got an idea. Billy, I found out yesterday where they cook these puddings. They boil them in the copper of the outhouse, and the cook leaves them there while she looks after the rest of the dinner."

"Ripping!" answered Billy. "I'll tell you what we'll do.—Hush! Is old Ginger awake?—All right. Well, we'll sneak into the outhouse to-morrow when the cook isn't looking, pinch the puddings out of the copper and chuck 'em in the pond."

"Why, Billy, that's just what I was going to say to you. But won't we scald ourselves?"

"I've thought of that. We'll get the garden fork and jab it into the puddings. They boil 'em in bags, you know."

"There's a better way than that. We'll get in before the copper has begun to boil."

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"I hadn't thought of that, *but I was just going to*," said Billy. "Yes, that's the way."

Enterprises such as these, however, were episodic, and merely serve to show how great souls, born under the same star, and united in the grand trend of their life-directions, share also the minor details of their activity. The seat of our affinities lay deeper. Both Billy and I were persons with an "end" in life, and breathed in common the atmosphere of great designs. We were like two young trees planted side by side on a breezy hill-top. Our roots were in the same soil; our branches swayed to the same rhythm; we heard the same secrets from the whispering winds. We were always on the heights. Few were the days of our companionship when we were not infatuated about something or other; and I sometimes doubt whether even yet I have outgrown the habit, so deep was its spring in my own nature and so strong the reinforcement it received from the influence of Billy. Sometimes we were infatuated about the same thing; and sometimes each of us struck out an independent line of his own; but always we were the victims of one mania or another.

At the time this history begins the particular mania that afflicted me was the collecting of tram-car tickets. My friends used to save them for me; I begged them from passengers as they alighted from the cars; I picked them up in the street; and

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I had over seven thousand collected in a box. I thought that when the sum had risen to ten thousand the goal of my existence would be reached; and it may be said that I lived for little else.

Billy's mania was astronomy. He would spend the hours of his playtime lying on his stomach with a map of the stars spread out before him on the floor. Billy was a great astronomer—in secret. On the very day when he and I were being initiated into the mysteries of decimals, he whispered to me in class, "I say, *I wonder how people found out the weight of the planets.*" He was an absent-minded boy, and many a clout on the head did he receive at this time for paying no attention to what was going on in class. Little did the master know what Billy was thinking of as he stared at the wall before him with his great, dreamy eyes—and not for ten thousand worlds would Billy have told him. He was thinking about the weight of the planets, and the problem lay heavy on his soul; and Billy grew ever more absent-minded, and spent more time on his stomach every day. At last he suddenly waked up and began to get top-marks not only in Arithmetic but in every other subject as well. And later on, when we came to the Quadratic Equations and the Higher Geometry, the master was amazed to find that Billy required no teaching at all.

"What has happened to Billy?" asked somebody;

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and the answer came, "Why, of course, Billy has *burst*."

So he had. Billy had found out "how they weighed the planets," and the mass of darkness that oppressed him had been blown away in the explosion. About the same time I burst also. On counting up my tickets I found there were ten thousand of them.

Then came a pause, during which Billy and I wandered about in dry places seeking rest and finding none. Life lost its spring and the world seemed very flat, stale, and unprofitable. Conversation flagged, or became provocative of irritable rejoinders. "I say, what are you going to do with all those tramcar tickets?" asked Billy one day. "Oh, shut up!" I replied. Shortly afterwards it was my turn. "Billy, tell me what they mean by 'sidereal time.'" "Oh, shut up!" said he.

We were both waiting for the new birth, or the new explosion, utterly unconscious of our condition. But the Powers-that-be were maturing their preparations, and, all being complete, they put the match to the train in the following manner.

The usual exchange of measles and whooping-cough had been going on in our school, and Billy and I being convalescent from the latter complaint, to which we had both succumbed at the same time, were sent out one day to take an airing in the Park. On passing down a certain walk, shaded by planes,

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we noticed a very old gentleman seated in a bath-chair which had been wheeled under the shadow of one of the trees. He sat in the chair with his head bent forward on his chest, and his wasted hands were spread out on the cover. He seemed an image of decrepitude, a symbol of approaching death. He was absolutely still. A young woman on the bench beside him was reading aloud from a book.

I think it was the immobility of the old man that first arrested our attention. The moment we saw him we stopped dead in our walk and stood, motionless as the figure before us, staring at what we saw. We just stared without thinking, but even at this long distance I can remember a vague emotion that stirred me, as though I had suddenly heard the wings of time beating over my innocent head, or as though a faint scent of death had arisen in the air around; such, I suppose, as horses or dogs may feel when they pass over the spot where a man has been slain.

Suddenly Billy Burst clutched my arm—he had a habit of doing that.

“I say,” he whispered, “let’s go up to him and *ask him to tell us the time.*”

We crept up to the bath-chair like two timid animals, literally sniffing the air as we went. Neither the old man nor his companion had noticed us, and it was not until we had both stopped in front

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of them that the reader looked up from her book. The old man was still unaware of our presence.

"If you please," said Billy, "would you mind telling us the time?"

At the sound of Billy's voice the old man seemed to wake from his dream. He lifted his head and listened, as though he heard himself summoned from a far point in space; and his eyes wandered vaguely from side to side unable to focus the speaker. Then they fell on Billy and his gaze was arrested.

Now Billy was a beautiful person—"the very image of his mater," people used to say. The eyes of the houri were his, the lids slightly elevated at the outer angle; he had the mouth of them that are born to speak good things; and about his brow there played a light which made you dream of high Olympus and of ancestors who had lived with the gods. Yes, there was a star on Billy's forehead; and this star it was that arrested the gaze of the old man.

A look of indescribable pleasure overspread the withered face. It almost seemed as if, for a moment, youth returned to him, or as if a breath of spring had awakened in the midst of the winter's frost.

"The time, laddie?" said he. "Why, yes, of course I can give you the time; as much of it as you want. For, don't you see, I'm a very old fellow—ninety-one last birthday; which I should think is not more than eighty years older than you, my

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little man. So I've plenty of time to spare. But don't take too much of it, my laddie. It's not good for little chaps like you. Now, *how much* of the time would you like?"

"The *correct* time, if you please, sir," said Billy, ignoring the quantitative form in which the question had been framed.

So the old gentleman gave us the correct time. When we had passed on, I looked back and saw that he was talking eagerly to his companion and pointing at Billy.

"I'll tell you what," said Billy as soon as we were out of hearing. "I've found out something. *It does old gentlemen good to ask them the time.* Let's ask some more."

So for an hour or more we wandered about looking out for old gentlemen—"to do them good." Several whom we met were rejected by Billy on the ground that they were not old enough, and allowed to pass unquestioned. Some three or four came up to the standard, and at each experiment we found that our magic formula worked with wonderful success. It provoked smiles and kind words; it pleased the old gentlemen; it did them good. Old hands were laid on young shoulders; old faces lit up; old watches were pulled out of old pockets. One was a marvel with a long inscription on the gold back of it. And the old gentleman showed us the inscription, which stated that the watch had been presented

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to him by his supporters for his services to political progress and for the gallant way in which he had fought the election at So-and-so in 1867. Yes, it did the old gentlemen good. But, be it observed, Billy was the spokesman every time.

From that time onward, Billy and I were Masters in Magic, no less, infatuated with our calling and devoted to our formula. The star-books were bundled into Billy's play-box; the ten thousand tramcar tickets were thrown into the fire.

Never since the world began, thought we, had a more glorious game been invented, never had so important an enterprise been conceived by the wit of man and entrusted to two apostles twelve years old. A world-wide mission to old gentlemen was ours. Who would have believed there were so many of them? They seemed to spring into existence, to gather themselves from the four quarters of the earth, in order that they might receive the healing touch of our formula. We met them in the street, in the Park, by the river, at the railway station, coming out of church—everywhere. And all were completely in our power. Oh, it was magnificent!

So it went on for three or four weeks. But a shock was in store for us.

At first, as I have said, Billy was the spokesman. But there came a day when it seemed good that some independence of action should be introduced

into the partnership. Billy went one way and I another.

Going on alone, I presently espied an old gentleman, of promising antiquity, walking briskly down one of the gravel paths. He was intermittently reading a newspaper. Trotting up behind him, I observed that in the intervals of his reading he would be talking to himself. He would read for half a minute and then, whipping the newspaper behind his back, begin to declaim, as though he were making a speech, quickening his pace meanwhile, so that I was hard put to it to keep up with him. Indeed I had to run, and was out of breath when, coming up along alongside, I popped out my question, "*If you please, sir, what o'clock is it?*"

"Go to the devil!" growled the old ruffian. And without pausing even to look at me he strode on, continuing his declamation, of which I happen to remember very distinctly these words: "I cannot, my Lords, I will not, join in congratulating the government on the disgrace into which they have brought the country." I recall these words because they resembled something in a speech of Chatham's which I had to learn by heart at school, and I remember wondering whether the old gentleman was trying to learn the same speech and getting it wrong, or whether he was making up something of his own.

Be that as it may, I had received a blow and my fondest illusion was shattered. I was personally

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insulted. As a professional magician I was flouted, and my calling dishonored. And, worst of all, the magic had broken down. For the first time the formula had failed to work—had done the old gentleman *no good*. I was cut to the heart.

I ran about in great distress, seeking Billy, whom finding presently I informed in general terms of what had happened.

"What did you say to the old beast?" asked Billy.

"I said, 'If you please, sir, what o'clock is it?'"

"Oh, you ass!" cried Billy. "*Those are the wrong words*. If you'd said, 'Would you mind telling me the time?' he'd have gone down like a ninepin. Only cads say 'what o'clock.' He thought you were a cad! Oh, you idiot! Leave me to do it next time."

Thus it came to pass that the partnership was resumed on its old basis, with Billy as the predominant member and spokesman of the Firm.

And now we entered on what I still regard as an enterprise of pith and moment. We determined, after long colloquy in the bedroom, to waylay this recalcitrant old gentleman once more, and repeat our question in its proper form, and with Billy as spokesman. Had I been alone, my courage would certainly have failed to carry me through. But with Billy at my side I was never afraid of anything either then or afterwards. O Billy, if only you had been with me—then—and then—if only I had felt your presence when the great waters went over me,

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if only I could have seen your tilted dreaming eyes when—I would have made a better thing of it, indeed I would! But one was taken and the other left; and I had to fight those battles alone—alone, but not forgetful of you. I did not fight them very well, Billy; and yet not so ill as I should have done had I never known you.

Well, for several days the declaiming gentleman whom we now knew as “the old beast,” and never called by any other name, failed to appear. But at last we caught sight of him, striding along and violently whipping his newspaper behind his back, just as before.

On the former occasion, when I was alone, I had operated from the rear, but with Billy in support, I proposed that we should attack from the front. So we threw ourselves in his path and marched steadily to meet him. On he came, and as he drew near, down went the newspaper, and, as though he were spitting poison, he hissed out from between his teeth a fearful sentence, of which the last words were: “the most iniquitous government that has ever betrayed and abused the confidence of a sovereign people”—staring meanwhile straight over our heads.

“If you please, sir,” said Billy in his singing voice, “would you mind telling us the time?”

“Go to——” But at that moment the gentleman lowered his fierce old eyes and encountered the gaze of Billy, who was standing full in his path.

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Have you ever seen a wild beast suddenly grow tame? I have not, but I saw something like it on the occasion of which I speak. Never did a swifter or more astonishing change pass over the countenance of any human being. I really think the old fellow suffered a physical shock, for he stepped back two paces and looked for a moment like one who has been seriously hurt. Then he recovered himself; lowered his spectacles to the tip of his nose; gazed over them, at me for a moment, at Billy for a quarter of a minute, and finally broke out into a hearty laugh.

"Well," he exclaimed, in the merriest of voices, "you're a couple of young rascals. What are your names, and how old are you, and what school do you belong to, and who are your fathers?"

We answered his questions in a fairly business-like manner until we came to that about the fathers. Here there was an interlude. For Billy had to explain, in succession, that he had no father, and no mother, and no brothers, and no sisters—indeed, no relations at all that he knew of. And there was some emotion at this point.

"Bless my soul," said the old gentleman, "that's very sad—very sad indeed. But who pays for your schooling?"

"A friend of my mater's," said Billy. "He's very good to me and has me to his house for the holidays."

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"And gives you plenty of pocket-money?"

"Lots," answered Billy.

The old gentleman ruminated, and there was more emotion.

"Then you are not an unhappy boy?" he said at length.

"Not a bit," answered Billy.

"Thank God for that! Thank God for that! I should be very sorry to learn you were unhappy. I hope you never will be. You don't *look* unhappy."

"I'm not," repeated Billy.

All this time the old gentleman seemed quite unconscious of my existence. But I was not hurt by that. I was well used to being overlooked when Billy was with me, and never questioned for a moment the justice of the arrangement. But now the old gentleman seemed to recollect himself.

"What was it you asked me just now?" said he.

"We asked if you would mind telling us the time."

"Ha, just so. Now are you quite sure that what you asked for is what you want? You said '*the* time' not 'time.' For you must know, my dears, that there's a great difference between 'time' and '*the* time.'"

Billy and I looked at each other, perplexed, and disgusted—perplexed by the subtle distinction just drawn by the old gentleman; disgusted at being addressed as "my dears." ("He might as well have given us a kiss while he was about it," we thought.)

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"We want *the* time, if you please," we said at length.

"What, *the whole of it?*" said the old gentleman.

"No," answered Billy, "we only want the bit of it that's going on now."

"Which bit is that?" said our venerable friend.

"That's just what we want to know," answered Billy.

This fairly floored the old gentleman. "You'll be a great Parliamentary debater one day, my boy," he said, "but the bit of time that's going on now is not an easy thing to catch. My watch can't catch it."

"Give us the best your watch can do," answered Billy.

This made the old fellow laugh again. "Better and better," said he. "Well, the best my watch can do is a quarter past twelve. And that reminds me that you two young scamps have made me late for an appointment. Now be good boys, both of you; and don't forget to write every week to your moth—to your friends. And put that in your pockets." Whereupon he gave each of us half-a-sovereign.

We walked on in silence, not pondering what had happened, for we pondered nothing in those days, but serenely conscious of triumph. A potent secret was in our hands and the world was at our feet.

"It worked," said Billy at length.

"Rather!" I answered.

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"It did him good."

"Rather!"

"We beat him."

"Rather!"

Presently we were greeted by the Park-keeper, who was a friend of ours.

"Well, young hopefuls," he said, "and who have you been asking the time of to-day?"

We pointed to the old gentleman whose figure was still visible in the distance.

"Him!" cried the Park-keeper. "Well, bless your rascal impudence! Do you know who *he* is?"

"No."

"Why, he's Lord ——."

The name mentioned was that of a distinguished member of the Cabinet which had recently gone out of office.

Did we quail and cower at the mention of that mighty name? Did we cover ourselves with confusion? Not we.

"I'm awfully glad we asked him," said Billy as we walked away.

"So am I—I say, Billy, I wish we could meet the Pope. He's jolly old, and I'll bet he's jolly miserable, too."

"You shut up about his being miserable," answered Billy, who, as we know, was a Roman Catholic. "He ain't half as miserable as the Archbishop of Canterbury. I wish we could meet *him*!"

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"Or the Emperor of Germany," I suggested.

"Yes, he'd do. I'd ask him, and you bet he'd tell us. But"—and here Billy's manner became explosive—"I'll tell you what! *I wish we could meet God!* He's a jolly sight older than the Pope, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Emperor of Germany. I believe he'd like to be asked more than any of them. And I'd ask him like a shot!"

"But *he's* not miserable," I interposed.

"How do you know he isn't—*sometimes*? It would do him good anyhow."

I was getting out of my depth. As a speculator I had none of the boldness which prompted the explosions of Billy, and an instinct of decency suggested a change of conversation.

"What shall we do with those half-sovereigns?" I asked.

"Hush!" said Billy, "*they'll* hear you."

"Who'll hear me?"

"Never mind who. They're listening, you bet. Never say 'half-sovereigns' again."

"But what are we to do with them?"

"Keep them. Let's put a cross on each of them at once."

So we took out the coins, and with our penknives we scratched a cross on the cheek of her gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria.

Both coins are now in my possession. The cross on the cheek of Queen Victoria has worked wonders.

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It has brought me good luck. In return I have hedged the coins with safeguards both moral and material. When I am gone they will be—— But I am anticipating.

And now the fever was in full possession of our souls. I believe we were secretly determined to bring all the old gentlemen in the world under the sway of our formula. We were beneficent magicians. Had we been older, a vast prospect of social regeneration would have opened before us. But all we knew at the time was that we possessed a power for rejuvenating the aged. An ardent missionary fervor burned in our bones; and we were swept along as by a whirlwind. Never was infatuation more complete.

As a preliminary step to the accomplishment of these great designs we resolved to ask ten thousand old gentlemen to tell us the time. Making a calculation, we reckoned that, at the normal rate of progress, nine years would be required to complete the task. We were a little disconcerted, and, in order to expedite matters, we resolved to include old ladies, and any young persons of either sex with gray hair, or who, in our opinion, showed other signs of prematurely growing old. This led on to further extensions. We agreed, first, that anyone who looked "miserable" should have the benefit of our formula; next, that all limitations whatsoever, save one, should be withdrawn, and the formula allowed a

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universal application. The outstanding limitation was that nobody should be asked the question until he had been previously viewed by Billy, who was a psychologist, and pronounced by him to be "the right sort." What constituted the "right sort" we never succeeded in defining; enough that Billy knew the "right sort" when he saw it and never made a mistake. We believed that all mankind were divided into two classes, the right sort and the wrong; in other words, those who were worthy to be asked the time and those who were not, and Billy was the infallible judge for separating the one from the other. To ask the question of any person was to seal that person's election and to put upon him the stamp of immortality.

I believed, and still believe, that many whom we accosted were instantly conscious of a change for the better in their general conditions. Years afterwards I met a man who remembered these things and bore testimony to the good we had done him. "It so happened," said he, "that just before I met you boys, that day, I had been speculating heavily on the Stock Exchange and had had a run of infernal bad luck. But the moment that little chap with the tilted eyes spoke to me I said to myself, 'The clouds are breaking.' And, by George, sir, my luck turned that very day. I walked straight to the telegraph office and sent my broker a wire which netted me a matter of £7000."

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As became a firm of businesslike magicians, Billy and I kept books, duly averaged and balanced, entering in them day by day the names of the persons to whom we had applied the formula. Are the names worthy of being recorded? Perhaps not. But a few specimens will do no harm and may incidentally serve to reveal the scope and catholicity of our operations. One of these books is before me now, and here are a few of the names, culled almost at random from its pages. It will be observed that in the last group our faculty of invention gave out and we were compelled to plagiarize.

Mr. Smoky, Mr. Shinytopper, Uncle Jellybones, Aunt Ginger, Lady Peppermint, Bishop Butter, Canon Sweaty, Dirty Boots, Holy Toad, Satan, Old Hurry, Old Bless-my-soul, Old Chronometer, Miss No-watch, Dr. Beard, Lord Splutters, Aurora, Mrs. Proud, Polly Sniggers, Diamond Pin, Cigar, Cutty-peroozle, Jim, Alfred Dear! Mr. Just-engaged, Miss Ditto, Mr. Catch-his-train, Mr. Hot, The Reverend Hum, The Reverend Ha-ha, So-there-you-be, Mrs. Robin, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Heady.

II

All of a sudden, and in the most unexpected manner, these vast designs of ours contracted their dimensions, or, as one might say, our outlook became focussed on a solitary point. From a world-wide

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mission to all mankind we narrowed down at a single stroke to a concentrated operation on a strictly limited class. But I can tell you that what our mission lost in scope it gained in intensity. You shall hear how all this happened and judge for yourself.

One night Billy and I were lying awake as usual, and the question "shall we talk?" had been asked and duly answered in the affirmative. We had raised ourselves in bed, leaning toward each other, and the telepathic current was running strong.

"Billy," I whispered, "I've got a ripping notion, a regular stunner. I'm bursting to tell you."

"What is it?"

"Put your ear a little closer, Billy, and listen like mad. Suppose you were to meet a beautiful woman—*what would you do?*"

Quick as thought came the answer—"I should ask her to tell me the time."

"Why, that's *exactly* what *I* should do. We'll do it, the very next time we meet one. And, Billy, I'm sure we shall meet one *soon*."

"So am I."

Next day, the instant we were freed from school we bolted for the Park, exalted in spirit and full of resolution. A lovely Presence floated in the light above us and accompanied us as we ran. Arrived in the Park, we seemed to have reached the threshold of a new world. We stood on a peak in Darien;

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and before us there shimmered an enchanted sea lit by the softest of lights and tinted with the fairest of colors. Forces as old as the earth and as young as the dawn were stirring within us; the breath of spring was in our souls, and a vision of living beauty, seen only in the faintest of glimpses, lured us on.

Think not that we lacked discrimination. "Let's wait, Billy," I said, as he made a dart forward at a girl in a white frock, "till we find one beautiful *enough*. That one won't do. Look at the size of her feet."

"*Whackers!*" said he, checking himself. And then he made a remark which I have often thought was the strangest thing Billy ever uttered. "I wouldn't be surprised," came the solemn whisper, "*if her feet were made of clay.*"

So day by day we ranged the Park, sometimes together, sometimes separate, possessed of one thought only—that of a woman beautiful enough *to be asked the time*. Hundreds of faces—and forms—were examined, sometimes to the surprise of their owners; but the more we examined, the more inexorable, the more difficult to satisfy, became our ideal. At each fresh contact with reality it rose higher and outran the facts of life, until we were on the point of concluding that the world contained no woman beautiful enough to be asked the time. Never were women stared at with greater innocence of heart, but never were they judged by a more fastidious taste.

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And yet we had no definable criterion. Of each new specimen examined all we could say was, "That one won't do." But *why* she wouldn't do we didn't know. We never disagreed. What wouldn't do for Billy wouldn't do for me, and *vice versa*.

Once we met a charming little girl about our own age, walking all alone. "That's the one!" cried I. "Come on, Billy."

I started forward, Billy close behind. Presently he clutched my jacket, "Stop!" he said, "*What if she has no watch?*"

The little girl was running away.

"We've frightened her," said Billy, who was a little gentleman. "We're two beasts."

"She heard what you said about the watch," I answered, "and thought we wanted to steal it. She had one after all. Billy, we've lost our chance."

As we went home that day, something gnawed cruelly at our hearts. Things had gone wrong. An ideal world had been on the point of realization, and a freak of contingency had spoiled it. In another moment "time" would have been revealed to us by one worthy to make the revelation. But the sudden thought of a watch had ruined all. Once more we had tasted the tragic quality of life.

With ardor damped but not extinguished, we continued the quest day after day. But we were now half-hearted and we became aware of a strange fall-

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ing-off in the beauty of the ladies who frequented the Park.

"We shall never find her here," said Billy. "Let's try the walk down by the river. They are better-looking down there, especially on Sunday afternoon. And I'll bet you most of them have watches."

The very day on which Billy made this proposal another nasty thing happened to us. We were summoned into the Headmaster's study and informed that complaints had reached him concerning two boys who were in the habit of walking about in the Park and staring in the rudest manner at the young ladies, and making audible remarks about their personal appearance. Were we the culprits? We confessed that we were. What did we mean by it? We were silent: not for a whole Archipelago packed full of buried treasure would we have answered that question. Did we consider it conduct worthy of gentlemen? We said we did not, though as a matter of fact we did. Dark hints of flagitiousness were thrown out, which our innocence wholly failed to comprehend. The foolish man then gave himself away by telling us that whenever we met Miss Overbury's school on their daily promenade we were to walk on the other side of the road.

Billy and I exchanged meaning glances: we knew now who had complained (as though we would ever think of asking *them* to tell us the time!). Finally we were forbidden, under threat of corporal chas-

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tisement, to enter the Park under any pretexts or circumstances whatsoever.

"The old spouter doesn't know," said I to Billy as we left the room, "that we've already made up our minds not to go there again. What a 'suck-in' for him!"

Necessity having thus combined with choice, the scene of our quest was now definitely shifted to the river-bank, where a broad winding path, with seats at intervals, ran under the willows. Here a new order of beauty seemed to present itself, and our hopes ran high. Several promising candidates presented themselves at once. One, I remember, wore a scarlet feather; another carried a gray muff. The scarlet feather was my fancy; the gray muff Billy's.

I think it was on the occasion of our third visit to the river that the crisis came. We sat down on the bank and held a long consultation. "Well," said Billy at last, "I'm willing to ask Scarlet Feather. She's ripping. Her *nose* takes the cake; but, mind you, Gray Muff has the prettier *boots*. And I know Scarlet Feather has a watch—I saw the chain when we passed her just now. But before deciding I'm going to have another look at Gray Muff. She's just round the bend. You wait here—I'll be back in half a second."

I was left alone, and for some minutes I continued to gaze at the flowing stream in front of me. Suddenly I saw, dancing about on the surface of

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the water—but doubtless the whole thing was hallucination! My nerves were in high tension at the moment, and in those days I could have dreams without going to sleep.

The dream was interrupted by the sudden return of Billy. He was white as the tablecloth and trembling all over.

"Come on!" he gasped. "I've found the very one! Quick, quick, or she'll be gone!"

"Is it Gray Muff?" I asked.

"No, no. It's another. The Very One, I tell you. The One we've been looking for."

"Billy," I said. "I've just seen a Good One too. She was dancing about on the water."

"Oh, rot!" cried Billy. "Mine's the One! Come on, I say! I'm certain she won't wait. She looked as though she wouldn't sit still for a single minute."

"What is she like, Billy?" I asked as we hurried away.

"She's—*oh, she's the exact image of my mater!*" he said.

Billy's mother had died about a year ago. At the age of twelve I had been deeply in love with her, and to this hour her image remains with me as the type of all that is most lovely and commendable in woman. O Billy's mater, will these eyes ever see you again? How glad I am to remember you! I know where you lie buried, but I doubt if there lives another soul who could find your resting-place.

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Harshly were you judged and conveniently were you forgotten! But I will scatter lilies on your grave this very night.

Well, we ran with all our might. Scarlet Feather, Gray Muff, and the dancing "Good One" on the surface of the water were clean forgotten as if they had never existed—as perhaps one of them never did. "*Just* like my mater!" Billy kept gasping. "Hurry up! I tell you she won't wait! She's on the seat watching the water; no, not *that* seat. It's round the next bend but one."

We turned the bend and came in sight of the seat where Billy had seen what he saw. The seat was empty. We looked round us: not a soul was in sight. We checked our pace and in utter silence, and very slowly, crept up to the empty seat, gazing round us as we walked. Was there ever such a melancholy walk! Oh, what a *Via Dolorosa* we found it! Arrived at the seat, Billy felt it all over with his hands and, finding nothing, flung himself face downwards on the turf and uttered the most lamentable cry I have ever heard.

"I knew she wouldn't wait," he moaned. "Oh, why weren't we quicker! Oh, why didn't I ask her the time the minute I saw her!"

As, shattered and silent, we crawled back to school, continually loitering to gaze at a world that was all hateful, I realized with a feeling of awe that I had become privy to something deep in Billy's soul.

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And I inwardly resolved that, so far as I could, I would set the matter right, and put friendship on a footing of true equality, by telling Billy the deepest secret of *mine*.

"Billy," I said, as we lay wakeful in the small hours of the next morning, "come and stay with us next holidays, *and I will show you something.*"

"What is it?"

"You wait and see."

The great adventure was over. It had ended in disaster and tears. Never again did Billy and I ask any human being to tell us the time.

III

In those days I was a great metaphysician. Unassisted by any philosopher, ancient or modern, I had made a discovery in the metaphysical line. This discovery was *my* secret.

In the church-tower of the village where I was nurtured there was an ancient and curious clock, said to have been brought from Spain by a former owner of the parish. This clock was worked by an enormous pendulum which hung down, through a slit in the ceiling, into the body of the church, swinging to and fro at the west end of the nave. Its motion was even and beautiful; and the sight of it fascinated me continually through the hours of divine service. To those who were not attentive,

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the pendulum was inaudible; but if you listened you could detect a gentle tick, tock, between the pauses of the hymns or the parson's voice. "Let us pray," said the parson. "Tick," whispered the pendulum. "We beseech Thee—" cried the clerk, (tick!);—"to hear us, good Lord" (tock!). The clerk had unconsciously fallen into the habit of timing his cadence in the responses to correspond with these whispers of the pendulum. For my part, I used to think that this correspondence was the most beautiful arrangement in the universe. I loved the even motion of the pendulum; but I loved the faithful whispers more. To this day I have only to shut my eyes on entering a village church and sit still for half a minute, and sure enough, stealing through the silence, comes the "tick, tock" of that ancient pendulum.

Of all the religious instruction I received during the eight or nine years we attended that church I confess I have not the faintest recollection. I cannot remember whether the sermons were good or bad, long or short, high, low or broad. I know they never wearied me, for I never listened to a word that was said. The pendulum saw to that. There were two parsons in our time. The first, I have heard, was a very good man, but by no effort of memory can I recall what he was like. The second I do remember, and could draw his face on this sheet of paper, were I to try. I respected

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and admired him, not, I am sorry to say, for the purity of his life or his faithfulness in preaching the Gospel, but because he had fought and licked our gardener, whom I detested, outside the village Pub. With a little concentration of mind I can reconstruct the scene in church during this parson's tenure of office. I can see the rascal eminent in his pulpit, plodding through his task. I can hear the thud of the hymn-book which my father used to toss into the clerk's pew when he thought the sermon had lasted long enough: immediately the sermon stops and a great bull-voice roars out, "Now to God the Father," and so on. But all such incidents are as a fringe to the main theme of my memory—the restless curve of the swinging disc, and the whispered syllables of Time. Tick! Tock!

The question that haunted me was this: Did the pendulum *stop* on reaching the highest point of the ascending arc? Did it pause before beginning the descent? And if it stopped, did *time* stop with it? I answered both questions in the affirmative. Well, then, what was a *second*? Did the stoppage at the end of the swing make the second, or was the second made by the swing, the movement between the two points of rest? I concluded that it was the stoppage. For, mark you, it *takes* a second for the pendulum to reach the stopping point on either side; therefore there can be no second till that point is reached; the second must *wait* for the stoppage to

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do the business. I saw no other way of getting *any* seconds. And if no seconds, no minutes; and if no minutes, no hours, no days, and therefore no time at all—which is absurd.

I found great peace in this conclusion; but none the less I continued to support it by collateral reasonings, and by observation. In particular I determined, for reasons of my own, to make a careful survey of the hands of the clock. With this object I borrowed my father's field-glass, and, retiring to a convenient point of observation, focussed it on the clock-face in the steeple. Instantly a startling phenomenon sprang into view. I saw the big hand of the clock, instead of moving evenly as it seemed to do when viewed by the naked eye, was visibly *jerking* on its way, in time with the seconds that were being ticked off by the pendulum inside. By George, the hand was going jerk, jerk! The pendulum and the hand were moving together! Jerk went the hand: then a pause. What's happening now? thought I. Why, the pendulum has just ticked and is going to tock. Tock it goes and—there you are! —jerk goes the hand again. "Why, of course," I said to myself, "that proves it. The hand *stops*, as well as the pendulum. The evidence of the hand corroborates the evidence of the pendulum. The seconds *must* be the stoppages. They can't be anything else. There's nothing else for them to be.

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I'll tell Billy Burst this very day! But no, I won't. I'll wait till the holidays and *show* it him."

Such was the secret which I resolved to impart to Billy in return for what he had disclosed to me.

Some months after this amazing discovery Billy came down for the holidays. He arrived late in the afternoon, and I could hardly restrain my impatience while he was having his tea. Hardly had he swallowed the last mouthful when I had him by the jacket. "Come on, Billy," I cried. "I'm going to show you something"—and we ran together to the church. Arrived there, I placed him in front of the pendulum, which seemed to be swinging that afternoon with an even friendlier motion than usual.

"There!" I said, "look at him."

Billy stood spell-bound. Oh, you should have seen his face! You should have seen his eyes slowly moving their lambent lights as they followed the rhythm of the pendulum from side to side. If Billy was hypnotized by the pendulum, I was hypnotized by Billy. Suddenly he clutched my arm in his wonted way.

"I say," he whispered, "*it knows us*. Here, old chap" (addressing the pendulum), "you know us, don't you? You're glad to see us, aren't you?"

"Tick, tock," said the pendulum.

"Can't he talk—just!" said Billy. "Look at his eye! He winked at me that time, I'll swear." And, by the Powers, the very next time the pendulum

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reached the top of the arc I saw the crumpled metal in the middle of the disc double itself up and wink at *me* also, plain as plain.

"Billy," I said, "if we stare at him much longer we shall both go cracked. Let's go into the churchyard. I've something else to show you."

So to the churchyard we went, and there, among the mouldering tombstones, I expounded to Billy my new theory as to the nature of Time, reserving the crowning evidence until Billy had grasped the main principle.

"So you see," I concluded, "the seconds are the stoppages."

"There aren't any stoppages," said he. "Pendulums don't stop."

"How can they go down after coming up unless they stop between?" I asked.

"Wait till you get to the Higher Mathematics."

"Then where do the seconds come in?"

"They don't *come* in: they *are* in all along."

"Then," I said triumphantly, "look at that clock face. Can't you see how the big hand goes jerk-jerk?"

"Well, what of that?"

"What of that? Why, if the seconds aren't the stoppages, what becomes of time between the jerks?"

"Why," answered Billy, "*it's plugging ahead all the time.*"

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"All *what* time?" I countered, convinced now that I had him in a vicious circle.

"Blockhead!" cried Billy. "Don't you remember what that old Johnny told us in the Park? There's all the difference in the world between *the* time and *time*."

"I'll bet you can't tell me what the difference is."

"Yes, I can. It's the difference between the pendulum and the clock-hand. Look at the jerking old idiot! *That* thing can't talk; *that* thing can't wink; *that* thing doesn't know us. Why, you silly, it only does what the pendulum tells it to do. The pendulum *knows* what it's doing. But *that* thing doesn't. Here, let's go back into the church and have another talk with the jolly old chap!"

Ten years later when Billy, barely twenty-three, had half finished a book which would have made him famous, I handed him an essay by a distinguished philosopher, and requested him to read it. The title was "On translating Time into Eternity." When Billy returned it, I asked him how he had fared. "Oh," he answered, "I translated time into eternity without much difficulty. *But it was plugging ahead all the time.*"

Shortly after that, Billy rejoined his mater—a victim to the same disease. Poor Billy! You brought luck to others; God knows you had little yourself. He died in a hospital, without kith or kin

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to close his eyes. The Sister who attended him brought me a small purse which she said Billy had very urgently requested her to give me. On opening the purse I found in it a gold coin, marked with a cross. The nurse also told me that an hour before he died Billy sat up suddenly in his bed and, opening his eyes very wide, said in a singing voice:

"If you please, Sir, would you mind telling me the time?"

II

A PSYCHOLOGIST AMONG THE SAINTS¹

THE day's work was done, the family had retired to rest, and the house was still. George Marsh sealed up the last of many letters, drew the curtains closer, and pushed an armchair in front of the fire. One quiet hour—the most precious of the day or night—and he too would retire. Should he read or think? He resolved to think.

Not wisely, perhaps; for his mind was troubled, and he began to brood upon a thought. The thought was one which had been nascent within him for months; he had felt it stirring within him all day long, and as he sat and brooded it was born. "I shall die as I have lived," he said aloud—"an unconverted man. I shall never be converted." And a profound melancholy overpowered him.

George Marsh was fifty-five years of age. By outward seeming he was a successful and very fortunate man. In the matter of health and wealth, of wife and child, he had won and kept what few men win ever and what fewer keep for long. None the less he seemed to himself, as he spread his

¹ Originally published in the *Hibbert Journal*.

hands over the dying fire, an utter failure and most unfortunate.

"It has all come to nothing," he said; "it will never come to anything." The clock struck twelve, and George Marsh heard "never" repeated twelve times. "That settles it," he went on, addressing the fire. "*I cannot be converted now. I know too much.*"

That day he had finished his course of lectures on "The Psychology of Religion," of which subject he was a professional teacher. The lectures had attracted a great audience and been a brilliant success. He had been told by a friend that they constituted an "epoch-making event"; not that Marsh himself attached much value to the epithet, for he had heard it too often about books and things which had been forgotten in a fortnight; but it was pleasant to hear, all the same.

In the last lecture he had dealt with "The Phenomena of Conversion: Their Inner Nature and the Laws of their Occurrence." He had laid down the famous "Three Laws of Conversion," "which," said an admirer, "are destined to revolutionize our conceptions of the spiritual realm as completely as Newton's Three Laws of Motion have revolutionized our conceptions of the physical universe." George Marsh ought to have been a proud man.

His brooding continued. "I have made my own

conversion impossible," he thought, "by learning to understand conversion. Nay, I have done more—and worse. I have let my audience into the secret, and as I cannot be converted, so neither can they. Once my book is published, conversion will become impossible to its readers for the reasons that make it impossible for me. It must never be published."

Hereupon a sudden impulse seized him. He rose from the fireside and snatched the manuscript of his lectures from the table. He hesitated for the moment, for the best of his life-work lay in those pages.

The door opened and his wife entered the room.

"What has happened to you?" she said. "It is past two o'clock. Are you going to sit up all night? And what are you doing with those manuscripts?"

"I'm going to throw them into the fire," said Marsh.

"Nonsense!" She snatched them out of his hand and promptly locked them up in a drawer. Mrs. Marsh was not unprepared. For many days she had heard her husband's mutterings and had divined the thought which was working, like a maggot, in his brain. "Now go to bed," said she, "and don't be a fool."

Marsh obeyed; and thus the work "which has produced a revolution in the spiritual realm" was saved for posterity.

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George Marsh had spent his life, as all men do, in the pursuit of the Infinite; and the long and short of it is that the quest had failed. Had he pursued the Infinite under the stimulation of alcohol or the lulling dreams of opium; had he tried the love of women, the heaping up of riches, or the "will-to-power"; had he sought the goal in the secret of perpetual motion or the squaring of the circle—his failure would have been no more complete. George Marsh had had recourse to none of these things; he had pursued the Infinite along paths which sages had trodden before him; but the Infinite was still uncaptured. This thought added to the bitterness of his defeat.

"I don't believe there is any Infinite," he said, "for if there were I should have found it ere now." This was not the language he used in his lectures; but it was language that came into his thoughts as he sat in the silent house on the night when this history begins.

Now the seekers of the Infinite may be divided into two classes. The first class is represented by any person who may happen to have spent a long morning searching for his lost spectacles and then found them on his nose; the second class by the Irishman who had to find the spectacles before he could look for them. The Infinite and the spectacles have this in common, that you may lose them as readily by putting them in the right place as

by putting them in the wrong. Lost in either way, both Infinite and spectacles are equally difficult to find. To which class of losers George Marsh belonged I do not know; but he certainly belonged to one of them, for there is no third.

I

He had been brought up in the straitest traditions of evangelical piety. But the reader must not infer from this that the parents of George Marsh were ignorant and narrow-minded people. They were eminent in every quality that is lovable: in the words of a distinguished American author who spent a month as the family guest, "they were the most lovely people he had ever met." And the same words may be applied to the aged clergyman, a noted Simeonite, who taught the family faith with learning and eloquence, and sustained it by the example of his character and daily life. I remember that circle well, and it stands out in memory like a place of palms and running waters amid the deserts of life. It may be that the prejudice of the years is creeping over me; for among the faces I see around there are none which speak to me of more honorable things. The type, they say, is disappearing; so much the worse for the world.

The evangelical teaching of those days reposed on a mechanical diagram, precise as if its reference were not to the fate of immortal souls, but to the work-

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ing of an eight-day clock. This was a source both of strength and of weakness. Of strength, because method, unity, coherence, with all their attendant mnemonic advantages, lay in the diagram; of weakness, because the neophyte was left to his own devices at the most dangerous point in his conversion—the point, namely, where the mechanism had to be transformed into a living thing. Hence it was that many stopped short at the mechanical outline, and play-acting had to do the rest. George Marsh was one of these. Whether the fault was his own, or whether it lay in the system, I cannot decide. But here are the facts.

When George was seventeen those about him became anxious for his conversion, and measures were taken to bring that event to pass. The chief agent in these proceedings was the evangelical clergyman. He set the appointed mechanism in motion, explained its working, and told the boy what to do and what to expect. All that was required of him in the way of prayer, repentance, faith, and works George was made to understand; and the good Simonite rested not from his labors until he was satisfied that the pupil had the lesson well by heart.

Nor was there the least recalcitrancy in George. Anxious as others were for his conversion, he was ten times as anxious himself. Before all things else he desired to be converted. Eagerly he drank in the words of his instructor, and, being a boy of good

memory he repeated the lesson to himself in his leisure moments and made sure that he had got it right.

His knowledge of the way of salvation was perfect; but he could not persuade himself, though he often tried to do so, that he himself was saved. This troubled him greatly. Not that his father or mother worried him about the matter, though he was conscious of their solicitude. They were content to wait upon God's good pleasure and were confident of the result.

The trouble began over the question of Repentance. George was willing, nay eager, to repent of anything, if only he could think of something worth repenting of. But he couldn't. A thousand times he told himself that he was a miserable sinner, but he didn't feel like one, and couldn't for the life of him understand what wrong he had done. It is true he had fired a pea-shooter at the cat; he had once killed a blackbird; he had kicked a little boy for making faces at him; he had been rude to his aunt; but he had far too much good sense to treat these actions as the needed raw material for genuine repentance. Once in his father's study he had seen a cash-box lying open on the table and had seriously debated the question of stealing a sovereign, in order to have something to "repent" of. But again his good sense came to the rescue. God was not likely to be deceived by so shallow a trick.

He took the difficulty to his spiritual adviser,

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from whom he learnt that he had been on the "wrong tack" in hunting for particular sins; that this was the false Romish method of dealing with human nature; that the root of the evil lay further back. Then the clergyman reminded him of his "fallen" condition. This George never doubted for an instant; he admitted it was a most lamentable state of affairs; but somehow the admission made no difference. After a good night's rest he woke up feeling just as jolly as if the Fall were unhistorical. Then it occurred to him that feeling jolly was the very sin of which he had to repent, for what fallen creature has a right to feel anything but miserable? So he fell on his knees, convinced that repentance had at last begun. "O Lord," he said, "I am very miserable because I felt so jolly just now. I repent of my fallen state." A moment later—for he was an honest boy—he cried, "O Lord, it's a lie. I'm only pretending. I'm not miserable at all." But he *was* miserable all the same.

As the days wore on his misery increased until it became intolerable. But one night a thought flashed through George's brain and gave him instant relief. "This misery," he suddenly reflected, "*is* my repentance. Why, I have been repenting all along without knowing it! Hurrah!" His devotions ended, he went to his collar-drawer and took out a card hidden under the white paper which covered the bottom of the drawer. On this card he had written

down the scheme of salvation under numbered heads. He now put a tick against Repentance, to indicate that the event had taken place. It was one of the happiest moments in his life.

But a new difficulty arose in regard to Faith. Here again he followed his instructions to the letter. The Simeonite told him what he must believe; and it fell under three heads. George was confident he would have no difficulty in believing them all, both in severalty and in combination. He fell asleep saying to himself for the hundredth time that he *believed*; and he went on saying it in his dreams. Next day he remembered his professions overnight, and looked in his heart for signs of the new birth that was to follow. But he couldn't find them. Again there seemed to be no difference. "Perhaps," he reflected, "the trouble comes from my not believing *enough*. I'll have another try to-night. I must *realize* these things." So he hit upon a plan. He wrote out the required acts of faith on three separate cards, and when night came he placed them in turn under the light of the gas, staring fixedly at each for many minutes and trying to *realize* what it meant. This went on for weeks. But it was no good. The only tangible result was that George had to take sleeping-draughts, to pay a visit to the oculist, and to wear blue spectacles for three months. But there was no new birth; at least there was nothing that he could identify under that description.

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Of all the accessory exercises he neglected none. He prayed and read his Bible, making strenuous efforts to "take in" what it meant, and staring at the great and blessed words, just as he stared at at his card, until the letters swam together and his head ached. All in vain. Do what he would, he couldn't get himself converted.

Then it occurred to him that perhaps he had been converted all the time without knowing it. The episode of his repentance might be repeated in his conversion as a whole. This gave him a passing comfort, and sent him to the Simeonite with the question on his lips, "What does it *feel like* when you are saved?" The Simeonite, in all kindliness and sincerity, told him what it "felt like." George groaned in spirit and said, "I don't feel like that—not one little bit." He was not converted, after all.

Nevertheless the interview was not without its fruits. Following his former practice, George, on returning home, wrote down on a card a list of the "feelings" that would arise within him at the hour of his new birth. He wrote them down in the very words of the Simeonite. "At all events," he reflected, "I now know what I am to expect. As soon as any of these feelings begin I shall know that I'm coming all right."

Every night, and at other times as well, he would draw forth his card of "feelings" and run his eye down the list. "Nothing to-day" was the usual re-

sult. "I've not felt any one of them." Sometimes he would get a little hope. "Numbers One to Five—nothing. But Number Six—well, I did feel a bit like that when I saw those two drunken men being taken to prison. I must try to get it back again. O Lord, I thank Thee for giving me a little of Number Six—give me some more, I beseech Thee. And oh, for Thy great Name's sake, give me Feelings One to Five." But the heavens were deaf.

The spiritual pathologist who was doctoring George's soul, having failed in his first course of treatment, tried another. He presented the boy on his eighteenth birthday with the works of John Bunyan; and his aunt—the one to whom he had been rude—added Law's *Serious Call*. Into this literature he launched forth, the Simeonite and the aunt standing on the banks, as it were, to give him his sailing directions. He relaxed none of his efforts. He was willing to embark on the very waters of death, on the bare chance of finding "saving truth." He would have eagerly swallowed the bitterest soul-medicine; and when medicine failed he would have submitted to the cruelest surgery, even to a capital operation, without anæsthetics, had such a thing been proposed. As a matter of fact, in his desperation, he did macerate his poor body in many ways, until the thing was discovered by the Simeonite and checked as a Romish error—of which George stood in the utmost fear. He spent whole nights in agonizing prayer.

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The result was that for the second time he passed out of the care of his ghostly physician and was handed over to those who heal the body. This brought some relief to his weary nerves and palpitating heart.

Then it was that George plunged into his birthday literature. He began with *The Pilgrim's Progress* and followed it with *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. And now his miseries came back upon him in a flood. Let no one suppose, however, that they bore the least resemblance to the appalling woes of John Bunyan. They did not—and there was the trouble. To be able to reproduce the Bunyan-agony was the very thing that George desired. But he could not reproduce it, though he tried with all his might. He would have given a king's ransom to feel that Satan was at his elbow. But Satan never came near him. George took solitary walks in the darkness and tried to imagine that the whispering winds were the voices of fiends. But he knew very well that they were nothing of the sort. One night he actually found himself praying to the devil to come out and fight him. But the devil was as deaf as the rest—at all events, he was in no humor for a fight with George Marsh. Then he stole out all alone to a dark lane, the high banks crowned with interlocking trees that formed a tunnel. This was the Valley of Humiliation. An old ilex grew in the ditch. As George, who was now

growing short-sighted, saw the shadowy form swaying in the wind, he tried to feel sure that Apollyon was advancing in all his fury. But he didn't feel sure. Nevertheless, on coming up to the tree, he made three passes at it with his stick, and then struck it a heavy, back-handed blow. The tree didn't care a pin, and George knew it didn't care. He tried to make the tree say, "Now, I have thee," and, finding it silent, he stabbed into its foliage again and again until a swaying branch knocked his cap off.

On another occasion the poor boy tied his old school-books into a big bundle, which he strapped on to his shoulders like a knapsack, and walked a long mile to another tree, a tree with bare arms outstretched, which suggested Something to George. He wanted to know "what it felt like," and thought that the experiment might prompt the beginning of "the real experience." Coming to the foot of the tree his back was nearly broken, and the buckle of the strap refusing to yield, George, who felt he couldn't stand the weight another minute, cut the leather with his pocket-knife. The bundle fell to the ground with a heavy thud and burst, and his big Latin dictionary flounced into a puddle; the mud can be seen on its pages even unto this day. He spent the rest of the night cleaning his books, for the boy was fearful of being found out.

II

His failure to "act Bunyan" caused him an infinite melancholy, and well-nigh broke his heart. This was his condition when the time came for him to go to the University. He was no longer the healthy boy who had discharged his pea-shooter at a cat. He was a tall, weedy youth of nineteen; there was a stoop in the narrow shoulders, and an ugly wrinkle between the eyes; he wore spectacles and looked on the ground.

He was sent to Oxford with a view, of course, to taking Orders. He was entered at a college where the Church influence was strong, and of the sort approved by his spiritual guides. "It will all come right in due time," said the Simeonite to George's parents. "The work of grace is only being delayed—no doubt for wise reasons. It is often so. We must wait in faith and prayer. I doubt if George will find peace until he begins the active work of the ministry." From which remark it will be seen that the excellent man was at his wits' end. To George, he said "Don't be over-anxious, my dear boy. Continue to pray and to read your Bible. One day you will feel something break within you, and then the new birth will begin."

So the boy went to Oxford expecting something to "break" within him. He kept a diary, and each

entry for the first six weeks concluded with these words, "Nothing has broken to-day."

But the pressure had been forced to the bursting-point, and an explosion was inevitable. In the seventh week of his first term the explosion took place; but it assumed a form and produced results which no one in the least expected or foresaw. In this it resembled all the conversions that have taken place since the world began.

One day he was on the tow-path watching the practice of his College crew. He wished he could row. His long arms and legs, he thought, would give him a splendid reach; and no doubt with a little training he could straighten his back and broaden his chest.

The wind was keen, and the water was rough. The coach on the tow-path was abusing Number 4 for his bad recovery, and Number 4 was listening to the coach with an air of admirable docility. Somehow Number 4, as he listened to the coach, reminded George of himself as he used to listen to the Simeonite; and for a moment religion and rowing were strangely mixed up in his mind.

The Cox cried "Paddle!" and the eight oars struck the water, once, twice, three times. Then came confusion. Something was wrong with Number 4. He failed to recover; his sliding seat gave way with a crash; his oar was in the air, his body at the bottom of the boat, and in an instant the whole thing was

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overturned and the crew were struggling in the water. The coach swore a mighty oath, the dripping crew waded ashore, and a thought flashed like lightning through George's brain. "By ——!" he said aloud, echoing the words of the coach, "it's all one piece of humbug from beginning to end. I'm going to chuck religion."

Had the youth paused to analyze what he "felt like" at that moment he would have noticed that he was feeling almost everything which the Simeonite had said he would feel at his first effective encounter with saving truth. He would have noticed that a great burden had rolled from his back and that his body, his whole being, was buoyant as air. He would have been aware that something "had broken" within him; he might even have heard it "go snap" in the middle of his head. He would have perceived a strange luminosity in the atmosphere, and he would have heard voices saying anything it pleased him to make them say.

But he had no leisure for introspection. He was in a hurry to do something and was busily thinking what he would do. He resembled a friend of mine who studies seismography in a Midland town. This gentleman had been longing all his life for an earthquake to shake his house. Hearing that some shocks had been felt in the neighborhood, he sent his seismograph to the makers to be adjusted. Hardly had he parted with his instrument when a slight shock,

the only shock felt in that city for a hundred years, rattled the crockery on his dinner-table. So it was with George. His conversion took place at an unguarded moment when the means for recording it were out of gear. He failed, therefore, to make a mental entry of its arrival; thereby inadvertently proving the genuineness of the occurrence.

George rushed from the tow-path, made his way to the nearest public-house, and ordered a glass of beer—a drink which he held in peculiar abhorrence. He took a sip and replaced the glass on the counter; a sweep emptied it the moment he turned his back. Next he went to the tobacconist and bought a pipe and an ounce of tobacco—which he never smoked; thence, to the bookseller's for the last sensational novel—which he never read. Arrived at his College room, his first act was to fling Law's *Serious Call* out of the window; five minutes later he went out into the quad and picked it up. This was the beginning of George's education in iniquity—but he never followed it up.

His conversion was not so complete—what conversion ever is?—as to effect a total breach between his present and his past. The idea of some entirely new state of being, arriving with cataclysmic abruptness, and bringing with it a new consciousness, continued to haunt him. This idea, which he had first imbibed under the forms of the evangelical tradition, now took other forms, but its principle re-

mained unchanged. As the artists in *Punch* exaggerate the length of the Prime Minister's nose while respecting the general formula of its construction, thereby endowing him with what is, to all intents and purposes, a false nose, but without doing injustice to the original, so George obtained his new opinions by slightly caricaturing the salient features of the old.

It is true that George had become a prominent member of that drastic body—the Young Men's Latter-Day Association. But if you had listened to him as he aired his views at the weekly meetings of the Association, on the New Era, the New Order, the New Morality, the New Thought, the New Man, the New Woman, the New Everybody, the New Everything, you would have recognized at once that he was still preaching the New Birth, with a slight difference of accent and terminology. At nineteen years of age he was an adept in the Signs of the Times; and his Scheme of Salvation was if anything more completely articulated, and assuredly more dogmatically enforced, than is that other Scheme, to indoctrinate him in which the good Simeonite had taken such pains. His Eschatology was worked out with that attention to minute detail which becomes a great commander in planning a campaign. If you wished to know what would happen to yourself under the New Order—whether, for example, you would be allowed to retain your latch-key—George could tell you. Latch-keys would be public

property. If you asked what treatment would be meted out to Mrs. Brown, who was just going to have her seventeenth baby, George could tell you. Mrs. Brown would receive from the State a retiring pension and a medal. A certain group of young gentlemen called "we" had settled all that; they had the Future in their waistcoat-pockets, and they were going to stand no nonsense at all. These young gentlemen lived in close and conscious proximity to a Great Event—a trait so precious, whether in youth or in age, that if egotism or excess should appear among its by-products we can welcome both. Egotistical and extravagant they undoubtedly were. In their own eyes they were the Saints of the New Order and the Elect of the Future, and they had little doubt that when the Great Upheaval came, as it assuredly would come in a few years, the brains of the entire human race would be turned inside out, while they themselves, so to speak, would be caught up into the air and set on thrones to judge the nations of the world. These Eschatologists were most excellent young men; the root of the matter was in them; they were pursuing the Infinite after their own fashion—and half of them are now dead. Some died in their mothers' arms, and the lilacs bloom above their graves; India has accounted for others; one, still a youth, the war correspondent of a London paper, was shot through the heart while taking notes in a square attacked by savages; one,

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grown grey in many battles, was blown to fragments by a shell in South Africa, and all they ever found of him was the hand on which he wore his dead wife's wedding-ring. Of the survivors I know of one who is an Archdeacon; another is a captain of industry and a philanthropist; and only the other day a third, who is a judge, broke down before the court while sentencing a wretched murderer to death. Fundamentally they were not mistaken. The Great Event has happened to most of them, and proved more surprising than their most confident predictions or their wildest dreams.

I am sorry to say that dissensions presently broke out in the Young Men's Latter-Day Association, and some of the more prominent members were driven into exile. From what the schism arose I do not know; perhaps it was the Election of the Committee, though I rather think it was the Constitution of the Universe. Among the exiles was George Marsh. He was not aware of any change in his principles; but there was some bad temper, and it was a noteworthy circumstance that from the date of his expulsion the books which had been previously open on George's table were now stowed away on the least accessible of his shelves.

III

Those were stirring times for young men. The enthusiasm created by Carlyle had hardly begun its

present lamentable decline; the bloom was still fresh on the *Origin of Species*; Huxley was firing great shot at the Towers of Darkness; Tennyson was in song; Ruskin was hard at work. Matthew Arnold, too, was at his best; and George Marsh, who began to browse in fresh fields, read *Literature and Dogma*, then a new book.

Now George, whether by temperament or by early education, was never happy save in pursuit of a Secret. The locked chamber of a New Experience always adjoined the plain apartment in which he lived, and George's business throughout was to find the key to that chamber and *get* the Experience that awaited him within. The experience that is was never good enough for him; the experience that is not, but may be, was what he must have. *Literature and Dogma* was therefore the very book to lay hold of him. For *Literature and Dogma*, as every one knows, deals with a certain Secret, held forth as the vital principle of religion. Now with religion George had resolved that he would have no more to do. But when he found, in conjunction with the denial of his rejected faith, the positive assertion of a new Secret, the young man at once pricked up his ears and became docile. The Secret seemed genuine. He resolved, therefore, that he would have it by hook or by crook, and he applied himself, heart and soul, to follow the directions given in *Literature and Dogma*. Not being sceptical by nature, he

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didn't pause to ask whether a Secret which worked so mightily while it remained a Secret would retain its efficacy after it had been found out and retailed in the booksellers' shops at so much a copy.

Behold him then with *Literature and Dogma* under the lamp, a blue pencil in his fingers, a notebook at his elbow. He learns that the Secret consists in a certain "sweet reasonableness"; that the way to the Secret is "Conduct"; that Conduct is "three-fourths of life"; that Religion is "morality touched with Emotion"; that there is a Something, not ourselves, "that makes for righteousness"; that the righteous have experimental proof that this Something is real. Each of these propositions is duly recorded. George is a little perplexed as to their relations with one another; but he infers that if he duly attends to Conduct the various propositions will relate themselves in a New Experience and so give him possession of the Secret.

Poor boy! You are too deeply in earnest; you are repeating your old mistake. If you would take what is written as so many themes for Literature, or as a true record of what can never be exactly repeated, or even as matter to preach about, it would all prove manageable enough. But these things will bring you into trouble if you read them as fixed Sailing Directions for the human soul on the fateful seas of life. And that, unfortunately, is what you are going to do!

Without delay George proceeded to put his new recipe into practice. He betook himself to "Conduct"; made it not three-fourths merely but the whole of his life, or very nearly the whole; put himself under the severest self-discipline and studied "Conduct" with an ardor truly admirable. I am afraid—indeed, I know—that he encountered much bewilderment, and found many moral questions hard to decide which had seemed easy enough before he began to think about them; moreover, he sometimes lost sight of great principles in the confusion of detail which attends their application. But he did his best; no Rabbi of olden time could have found much fault in him. He knew, of course, the dangers of self-righteousness, but guarded himself against them by a method of his own. What with one thing and another he had a hard time of it. But he stuck to his task, hourly expecting the "Secret" to disclose itself, and looking into himself for signs that the New Experience was coming to the birth.

Now I am not going to say that all this effort was wasted. From what I know of George Marsh I am inclined to think that it did him more good than all the rest of his education put together, and there are several young gentlemen of my acquaintance whom I would urgently advise to take a leaf out of this part of George's book. None the less it must be recorded that in one sense the enterprise

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was a failure. True, he found a Secret and got a New Experience; but the Secret he found was not the Secret he sought, and the New Experience he got was not the New Experience he expected. Furthermore—and this is the most important of all—it was not till nearly thirty years after these efforts that he realized they had yielded him any Secret or any Experience whatsoever.

His great difficulty lay not in the practice of morality—though this was often hard enough—but in securing “the touch of emotion.” The morality came, but the emotion seemed to linger. Here, however, he was again mistaken; and the mistake was a repetition, with a difference, of one he had made on former occasions. He had formed in advance a certain notion of what it would “feel like”; but it felt like something else. When, therefore, the emotion came—and it came in abundance—it was so entirely different from what he had expected that he failed, as before, to recognize that it was emotion at all.

George had expected exultations and splendid agonies. What came was depression and care. When he read the word “emotion” on the printed page he thought of thrills, of splendors, of ecstasies; of Love that is mightier than death; of Peace that is deeper than the sea; of Compassions that moan like the winds; of luxurious griefs; of overwhelming visions from the mountain-tops of life; of music,

starry spaces, and the calm of ancient groves and vast cathedrals; of the flowers that never fade and the odors that are wafted from Elysian fields. These were the emotions whose "touch" upon morality would clothe the dry bones with flesh and put the living spirit within them. But George had not reflected that there are emotions of another order; that these, too, may "touch" morality and transform it not into the likeness of life, but into the very dust of death. And these were the emotions that actually came and "touched" poor George; they came in secret; came like thieves in the night; came without any labels on their backs; came and went without suffering him to know their names or even to observe that they had come. Instead of the scent of flowers he felt the prick of thorns; instead of exultations there was anxiety; instead of the victor's crown there was the yoke of self-contempt; instead of great music there was the crack of whips; instead of the joy of attainment there was the lurking horrible fear that he was becoming a moral prig. With all these unexpected emotions there mingled a feeling of bitter disappointment at the non-arrival of the emotions that were expected; and this bitterness was itself the principal emotion that "touched" the morality of George Marsh. In fine, he was intensely miserable, and his misery was his emotion.

He was satisfied that he had made no mistakes. He was confident that he understood the construc-

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tion of this new machine, that he had put the parts together in the right order, that he had got his steam to the right pressure, that he had pulled the levers in the right way. How was it, then, that the wretched thing wouldn't work? Why, of course, there was only one explanation. "It was a piece of humbug from beginning to end. It never had worked and never could work. *I'm going to chuck morality,*" said George.

IV

For a whole twelvemonth or more George lived under the firm belief that he had "chucked" morality. And he certainly did "chuck" it in the papers he read before the College Dialectical Society, and in temerarious conversations with certain gentlemen who were twice his own age. These gentlemen were much concerned for his future, and took pains to convince him of the error of his ways—or rather of his words. The result was that his "views" became more startling and scandalous. He even went so far as to sketch the ground-plan of one or two splendid sins. Meanwhile he was living a most innocent life and reading poetry. He began with Swinburne, and in due course—for he was no slave to chronological order—he came to Wordsworth.

His first attitude to Wordsworth was contemptuous. But he was too well-born, and too innocent,

to keep that up for long. Besides, there was something in Wordsworth that touched the deepest spring of his being. It was the hint of another world—a world of New Experience, to which entry could be found by the lifting of a veil. Before George had finished the second reading of “the Prelude” he had repented of his resolve to “chuck” morality. Then he turned to “the Excursion,” some parts of which had a reviving effect on the abandoned resolution. But when he came to the Vision of the Wanderer, he was completely conquered. He laid down the volume with a fixed resolve that *that Vision should be his own*. The prophets, he thought, had deceived him, but the poet cannot lie.

His preparations were made with the forethought which characterized all his spiritual experiments. He studied the Wanderer’s Vision and everything that has been written about it. He made acquaintance with certain philosophers who have used the Vision as a text. He even went into a kind of training for the Great Event, kept a watch on his thoughts, took lonely walks into the country, and practiced Visions from the modest hill-tops of the neighborhood. George was a little disconcerted with the result of these preliminary exercises; but he set it down to the tameness of the local scenery.

He had ascertained the exact spot in the Lake District at which the Vision of the Wanderer is supposed to have occurred, and he had taken up

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his quarters at the nearest hotel. He waited until the conditions were perfect for the experiment; watched the barometer, and felt his pulse; deferred action the first day because the clouds threatened; started the second, and then came back because his head was not clear. On the third day health and weather were both favorable, and, with prayers on his lips, he took his way to the sacred spot. Arrived there, all seemed to promise him fair. He drew the volume from his pocket and read the Vision aloud. As he read, the sun rose in all its splendor, and the world was bathed in glory. George waited for Something to Happen.

Nothing happened.

"Nothing happened." These were his own words when he told me the story in after years. But they are not true to the fact, and they illustrate once more the tendency of his introspective faculty to overlook what was essential in his experience. Something *did* happen—something not in the formula. *The whole experiment fell flat as any thrice-told tale.* He was looking at sublimities beyond the power of words; the world was drenched in loveliness and light; but for any ecstasy produced in George he might as well have been gazing at a miserable collection of stage properties. Under other circumstances he would have taken a healthy soul's delight in what he saw, and would certainly have

forgotten himself. But at this moment the mountains wore a perky air of artificiality, as though they had got themselves up for their parts; the heavens had been painted blue by some self-conscious impressionist; the clouds seemed made of cotton-wool; all was mechanism and vulgar pretence; and so far was that would-be visionary from entering into rapt communion with Nature that never in his life did he experience so deep a sense of loneliness and utter separation from the world. His self-consciousness became intense, and it was the consciousness of an outcast. He fixed his eyes on the loftiest peak, and the impression deepened that the thing was sham. He looked up to the sky, and became suddenly conscious that his right boot was pinching him. He listened to the bleating of sheep in the valley below, and instantly, to his shame, he thought of mutton-chops. A shy primrose attracted his attention; he recalled Peter Bell, stared at the primrose for full five minutes, concluded that he had never seen so uninteresting a flower, and then, feeling a sharp pain in his eyeballs, remembered the warnings of his oculist. Was some spirit mocking him? Or was Nature offended at his errand? With these questions in his mind he rushed down the mountain, ate a scanty breakfast, packed his copy of Wordsworth at the bottom of his trunk, and took the next train home.

V

It may be thought that with three disappointments placed to his credit George would now abandon his attempt to obtain Initiation into the Mysteries. But the chains of destiny are not so easily broken. Fate had decreed that he should turn a blind eye to his experience and attend only to his experiments. The New Experience for which he was ever on the watch was to come as the result of a New Experiment conducted according to formula. If an experiment failed, it was because the formula was faulty and needed amendment. George was none of your faint-hearted seekers who abandon the quest on the failure of their first attempts. He thought of Science, and remembered the disappointments of the laboratory. He saw the great discoverers testing hypothesis after hypothesis, conducting fruitless experiments by the score, trying this and trying that until in a happy moment they hit upon the formula which covered the facts. Had he experienced fifty disappointments instead of three, he would have proceeded with unabated ardor to make the fifty-first.

The next experiment lasted over twenty years. When George had taken his degree, he resolved, with the advice of his tutors, to devote himself to the study of Philosophy. In a few years he became a notable exponent of Pantheism, wrote a

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book, and received an academical appointment. It was whispered that he had become a Buddhist.

During the whole of that period he seemed to himself on the very eve of success, never quite attaining the Secret, but so near attainment as to leave no doubt in his mind that he had found the right formula at last. Meanwhile the river of life was pouring its waters under the mill, and every moment marked the birth of a New Experience and the initiation into a Mystery. But he was not attending to that. As usual, he was busy with an Experiment.

In his pantheistic period George was fully convinced that the sensible world is an illusion, and that he himself was no more than a stain on the radiance of Eternity. The trouble was that his "feelings" didn't keep pace with his convictions, and this emotional impotence was exceedingly hard to cure. He found himself utterly unable to "realize" the illusoriness of the world—which is not to be wondered at; and he had to confess that in himself he didn't "feel like" a stain—on Eternity or on anything else. Nay, there was something more; and students of Marsh's *System of Philosophy* will remember that the matter is fully discussed in the chapter entitled "The Inverse Ratio of Conviction and Feeling." The fact was, that by as much as the logic became irrefragable which demonstrates that the world is an illusion by so much the more

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did the "feeling" grow that the world is intensely real. He found, moreover, that the very ease with which he could prove, on paper, that he was Nothing gave him, oddly enough, the "feeling" that he was Something. He also noticed that the process of handling particular things by the Pantheistic Logic had a kind of indurating effect upon their substance, in consequence of which those things refused to melt at the moment when, theoretically, they ought to have dissolved themselves into the All. Again it was rather disconcerting; but he set it down to some defect, or excess, in his imaginative faculty.

He resolved, therefore, to make himself acquainted with the facts of Conversion as recorded in the mystical literature of all ages, in the hope that these would incidentally reveal what was wrong with him. For ten years he devoted himself to this study with unremitting ardor. The result was that he became an authority on mysticism, obtained qualifications which caused him to be appointed to his lectureship in the Psychology of Religion, and discovered the "Three Laws of Conversion" which have produced a revolution in the spiritual realm, and made the discoverer famous all over the world. But at the end of it all George Marsh remained an unconverted man.

Then occurred the incident related at the beginning of this narrative.

VI

As the lightning which shineth from the one part of heaven even unto the other, so is the coming of everything that is critically important for the human mind. No prophet can foretell the hour, the place, or the form. The secret chambers are empty; the wilderness utters no sound; two men are in one bed; two women are grinding at the mill; and the pendulum of time swings undisturbed. Suddenly the Sign of the Son of Man leaps across the sky and astonishment falls on the face of all the earth. The effect is visible, but the cause is hidden; and History, seeking to recover it, can find no more than the Shadow of a Shade.

There happened to be living at this time, in a remote part of the country, a certain poor and solitary man, the only religious genius I have ever seen in the flesh. A stream, famous for trout, ran across the line of this Poor Man's beat: and it was not altogether without design on my part that George Marsh, who was an ardent fisherman, spent a summer on the banks of that stream. But later on—through the intervention of another person—the two, George and the Poor Man, became friends.

From that time his luck as a fisherman seemed to desert him. Day after day he came back with his basket empty. But the truth was that, as often as not, he had never cast a fly on the water. He had

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been wandering in solitary places seeking out the Poor Man.

"He's a most extraordinary person," said George to me.

"So are we all," I added.

"True. That's precisely what I have learnt from him. Do you know, he's the only religious man I ever met whose religion was not at least three parts an imitation. In him the proportions are reversed. I wish I had known him before I wrote my big book. He has upset one of my theories."

"He has upset several of mine," I said.

Five years later George Marsh passed away after a lingering and painful illness. I saw him often in the interval, and never did he appear to me a disappointed man.

Once he said to me, "I am thinking of writing my Autobiography. It would throw some light on the Psychology of Religion; more, by far, than anything I have written hitherto. Of all the facts I have discovered in my studies, none is so wonderful as the course of my own life. It has been an amazing experience. As I lie here and recall what has happened, it seems to be that I have been an instrument in the hands of some inscrutable Power. At times I fall into a state of pure astonishment. But I am glad that things were as they have been; after all, nothing has come amiss, nothing has been unkindly done."

Later on, when the end was drawing near, I found him with Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums* open on the coverlet. "Somehow," he said to me, "I think that Harnack has missed the essence of Christianity. If a man tried to be a Christian on the lines of Harnack's definition¹ he would get into all my old difficulties."

"Where do *you* find the essence of Christianity?" I asked.

"In the Parable of the Great Surprise," he answered.

"Which do you mean?" I asked. "All the Parables are 'Great Surprises' in a sense."

"Yes; but the one I mean is not merely a surprising Parable; it is the Parable *of* a Surprise." And then he began to quote, "Lord, *when* saw we thee an hungered," and so on to the end.

"George," I added after a little, "*He* never said what people expected He was going to say."

"Nor *did* what people thought He ought to do. His sayings are like great explosions, and His deeds are much the same. At least"—and here he seemed to correct himself—"it is the unexpected which has left its impress on the record. Miracles are the only fitting atmosphere for such a character. By the way, I have an idea for a new theory of the Dual Nature of Christ which you may add, if you like, to

¹ "Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God."—T. B. Saunders' translation.

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the multitude already in existence." And a faint smile came over the wan features of my friend.

"Tell it me."

"He was Man in so far as He did what was expected, and God in so far as He took the world by surprise."

"Rank heresy," I said, "from every point of view. Orthodoxy would be furious to hear it; and scientific theology would condemn you for degrading the Modern Conception of God."

"Perhaps both parties would make some allowance," he answered, "if they had had an experience like mine. It's no uncomfortable faith even for a man in my condition. Life and death and all that lies beyond fall into the same category. Or rather they fall into no category at all. I've not done with surprises. There are others in store for me." And his white fingers began to fumble with the sheets.

In the Chapel of his College a brass tablet has been erected to the memory of George Marsh. It simply gives his name and age, and states that "he was a distinguished member of this University." At his wife's request no mention was made of his services to the Psychology of Religion. But she caused these words to be added at the foot, and I think she must have heard them from his own lips, for he had often used them even to me—

"Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

III

WHITE ROSES

OF ALL the conversations of the learned, those in which History and Philosophy maintain the dialogue are probably the most instructive. Such a conversation I was fortunate enough to hear not long ago at the dinner-table of a friend; and the occasion was the more interesting inasmuch as the Philosopher of the party was led by a turn of the argument to lay aside his mantle and assume the rôle of the story-teller; thereby providing us with a valuable comment on the very philosophy with which his own illustrious name has been long associated.

We had been talking during dinner about a certain Expedition to the South Seas undertaken by the British Government in the eighteenth century; and the Historian had just finished a most surprising narration of the facts, based on his recent investigation of unpublished documents, when our Hostess glanced at the clock, and rising from her chair gave the signal to the ladies to depart.

When we had resumed our places the Professor of Philosophy said to the Historian:

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"I wish you would tell us what in your opinion it was that caused the Expedition to turn out such an utter failure."

"The Expedition failed," said the Historian, "because the commander was not allowed to select his own crews. The Government of the day was corrupt, and insisted on manning the ships with men of its own choosing. Some were diseased; others were criminals; many had never handled a rope in their lives. Before the fleet had doubled Cape Horn one-third of the crews had perished, and the rest were mutinous. The enterprise was doomed to failure from the start."

"The whole planet is manned in the same manner," said the Pessimist, as he helped himself to one of our Host's superlative cigars. "I'm sorry for the Commander, whoever he is."

"What precisely do you mean?" said the Professor of Philosophy, holding a lighted match to the end of the Pessimist's cigar.

"I mean," said the Pessimist, "that the prospects of the Human Expedition can't be very bright so long as Society has to put up with anybody and everybody who happens to be born. I suppose there is a Human Expedition," he went on. "At least, *you* have written as though there were. But who selects the crew? Nobody. They come aboard as they happen to be born, and the unfortunate Commander has to put up with them as they come—

broken men, jail-deliveries, invalids, sea-sick land-lubbers, and Heaven knows what. Who in his senses would put to sea with such a crowd? Humanity is always in a state like that of your Expedition when it doubled Cape Horn—incompetent, mutinous, or sick unto death. And what else can you expect in view of the conditions under which we all arrive on the planet?"

The Host now glanced uneasily at the Professor of Philosophy, whose treatise on *The World Purpose* was famous throughout three continents. The Professor was visibly arming himself for the fray: he had just filled his claret-glass with port.

"Remember," said the Host, "that we must join the ladies in twenty minutes at the utmost."

"I'm not going to argue," replied the Philosopher, after a resolute sip at his port; "I'm going to tell you a story."

"Tell it in the drawing-room," said the Son of the House, who had taken his pretty cousin down to dinner, and was a little exhilarated by that and by the excellence of his father's wine; "that is to say,"—and he spoke eagerly, as if a bright idea had struck him,—"that is to say, of course, if it will bear telling in the presence of ladies."

There was a roar of laughter, and the Son of the House blushed to the roots of his hair.

"I am inclined to think," said the Professor, "that

my story, so far from being unsuitable for the ladies, will be intelligible to no one else."

"We'll join the ladies at once," said the Host, "and hear the Professor's story."

The Pessimist, who was fond of talking, now broke in. "That," he said, "is most attractive, but not quite fair to me. I should like to finish what I have begun. And I doubt if my views will be quite in place in the drawing-room. Besides, the Professor must finish his port. I was only going to say," he went on, "that the having to put up with all that comes in human shape is a very serious affair. It seems to me that we all arrive in the world like dumped goods. Nobody has 'ordered' us, and perhaps nobody wants us. Our parents wanted us, did you say? Well, I suppose our parents wanted children; but it doesn't follow that they wanted *you* or *me*. Somebody else might have filled the book as well, or better. Our birth is a matter of absolute chance. For example, my father has often told me how he met my mother. There was a picnic on a Swiss lake. My father's watch was slow, and when he arrived at the quay the boat that carried his party was out of sight. It so happened that there was another party—people my father didn't know—going to another island, and seeing him disconsolate on the quay they took pity on him and made him go with them. It was in that boat that he first met my mother. The moral is obvious. If

my father's watch had kept better time I should never have been in existence. ["A jolly good thing, too," whispered the Son of the House.] Neither would my six brothers, nor any of our descendants to the *n*th generation. Well, that's how the whole planet gets itself *manned*. That's how the crew is 'chosen.' And that's why the Expedition gets into trouble on rounding Cape Horn."

"It's a capital introduction to my story," said the Professor, in whom, after his second claret-glass of port, *The World Purpose* had assumed a new intensity. "I wish the ladies could have heard it."

"I venture to think," said our Host, "that the ladies will understand the story all the better for not having heard the introduction. You see, I am assuming that the story is a good one—which is as much as to say that no introduction is needed."

"Thank you," said the Professor.

"I say," broke in the Son of the House, "I say, Professor, it's a pity you didn't take that question up in *The World Purpose*. That's an awfully good point of the Pessimist's, and a jolly difficult one to answer, too. I should like to see you tackle it. Why, I once heard the Pater here say to the Mater——"

"We'll go upstairs," said our Host.

"About ten years ago," the Professor began, "I was traveling one night in a third-class carriage to

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a town on the North-east Coast. My two companions in the compartment were evidently mother and daughter. The mother had a singularly beautiful and intelligent face; and the daughter, who was about twelve years old, resembled her. They were dressed in good taste, without rings or finery, and, so far as I am able to judge such things, without expense.

"Prior to the departure of the train from the London terminus, I had noticed the two walking up and down the platform and looking into the carriages, apparently endeavoring to find a compartment to themselves. They did not succeed, and finally entered the compartment where I was. Whether I ought to have been flattered by this, or the reverse, I knew not.

"I could see they wanted to be alone, and I felt a brief impulse to leave them to themselves and go elsewhere. It would have been a chivalrous act; but whether from indolence, or curiosity, or some other feeling, I let the impulse die, and remained where I was.

"The girl began immediately to arrange cushions for her mother in the corner of the carriage; and from the solicitude she showed, I gathered that the mother, though to all appearance in health, was either ill or convalescent. By the time I had come to this conclusion the train was already in motion, or I verily believe I should have obeyed my first

impulse and left the carriage. I am glad, however, that I did not.

"When all had been arranged I noticed that the two had settled themselves in the attitude of lovers, their hands clasped, the girl resting her head on the mother's shoulder and gazing into her face from time to time with a look of infinite tenderness. And it was some relief to me to observe that, lover-like, they seemed indifferent to my presence.

"I was reading a book, though I confess that my eyes and mind would constantly wander to the other side of the carriage. I am not a sentimental person, and scenes of sentiment are particularly objectionable to my temper of mind; but for once in my life I was overawed by the consciousness that I was in the presence of deep and genuine emotion. Finally, I gave up the effort to read; a strange mental atmosphere seemed to surround me; I fell into a reverie, and I remember waking suddenly from a kind of dream, or incoherent meditation on the pathos and tragedy of human life.

"I looked at my companions and I saw that both were weeping. The girl was in the same position as before. The mother had turned her face away, and was looking out into the blackness of the night. Tear after tear rolled down her cheek.

"They must have become conscious that I was observing them, though God knows I had little will to do so. I took up my book and pretended to

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read; and I knew that an effort was being made, that tears were being checked, that some climbing sorrow was being held down. Presently the lady said, speaking in a steady voice—

“Do you know the name of the station we have just passed?”

“I told her the name of the station; asked if I should raise the window; spoke to the girl; offered an illustrated paper, and so on through the usual preliminaries of a traveler’s talk. The answers I received were such as one expects from people of charming manners. But nothing followed, for a time, and I again took up my book.

“The book I was reading, or pretending to read, was a volume of the Ingersoll Lectures, bearing on the back the title *Human Immortality*. Once or twice I noticed the eyes of the woman resting on this; but I was greatly surprised when, in one of the pauses when I laid down the book, she said—

“Would you mind my asking you a question?”

“Certainly not.”

“Do you believe in the Immortality of the Soul?”

“As a teacher of philosophy I am accustomed to leading questions at all sorts of inopportune moments, but never in my life was I so completely taken aback. However, I collected my thoughts as best I could, and, though the subject is one on which I never like to speak without prolonged preparation, I briefly told her my opinions on that great prob-

lem, as you may find them expressed in my published works. Possibly I spoke with some fervor; the more likely, because I spoke without preparation. She listened with great attention; and as for the young girl, her face was lit up with a look of intelligent eagerness which, had I seen it for one moment in my own class-room, would have rewarded me for the labor of a long course of lectures.

"I had still much to say when the train drew up at the platform of St. Beeds.

" 'I'm sorry not to hear more,' said the lady, 'but this is our destination.'

" 'And there's Dad!' cried the girl.

"A man in working clothes stood at the carriage-door.

" 'Good-bye,' said the woman, warmly shaking me by the hand; 'you have been most kind to me.'

" 'Good-bye,' said the daughter; 'you're a dear old dear!'

"And with that she threw her arms round my neck and kissed me fervently three or four times. I was greatly surprised, but not altogether displeased.

"They were evidently a most affectionate family. As the train moved off the three stood arm in arm before the carriage-door.

" 'Got two sweethearts to-night, sir,' said the man.

" 'And without jealousy,' said I. 'I congratulate you on each of them.'

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"‘I hope you’ll forgive my daughter,’ he said; ‘she’s an impulsive little baggage.’"

"‘She may repeat the offense the next time we meet,’ I replied; and we all laughed.

"It was a joyful ending to what had been in some respects, a painful experience."

"I don’t see the point of your story, Professor; and I am at a loss to imagine what it has to do with my introduction." This from the Pessimist.

"The story has only begun," said the Professor, who was sipping his tea.

"Those kisses at the end were jolly hard lines on a man who dislikes sentiment," said the Son of the House.

"I didn’t find them so," answered the Professor. "But remember, they were only the kisses of a child."

"The best sort," growled the Pessimist.

"True," said our Hostess. "The judgments of children are the judgments of God. But let the Professor go on."

"It was seven or eight months later," the Professor resumed, "when on opening the *Times* one morning my attention was caught by an item of news relating to the town at which my two companions had alighted from the train. The news itself was of no importance, but the name of the town

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printed at the head of the paragraph strangely arrested me, and served to recall with singular vividness the incident of my former journey. I found myself repeating, in order and minute detail, everything that had happened in the carriage, some of the particulars of which I had forgotten till that moment. The end of it was that I became possessed with a strong desire to visit St. Beeds, though I had no connections whatever with the place, and had never stayed there in my life. I knew, of course, that it was an interesting old town, with a famous Cathedral, and I remember persuading myself at the time, and indeed telling my wife, that I ought to visit that Cathedral without further delay. As the day wore on the impulse grew stronger, and eventually overpowered me. I traveled down to St. Beeds that night, and put up at one of the principal hotels.

"The next morning was spent in the usual manner of sight-seers in an ancient town. Reserving the Cathedral for the afternoon, I visited the old wall and the dismantled quays, and wandered among the narrow streets, reading history, as my habit is, from the monuments with which the place abounded. About noon I found my way to the spacious marketplace, and began inspecting the beautiful front of the old Town Hall.

"I suddenly became aware of a man on the opposite pavement, who was watching me with some

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interest. What drew my attention to him was a large mass of white roses which he was carrying in a basket; for, as you know, I have been for many years an enthusiastic rosegrower, and there is nothing which attracts the mind so rapidly as any circumstance connected with one's hobby. The man was dressed in good clothes; and it was this that prevented me at first from recognizing him as the person who had met my two companions at the station seven months before.

"Seeing that I had observed him, he crossed the street.

"'You remember me?' he said. 'Well, I have been looking for you all over the town. Had I known your name I should have asked at the hotels.'

"'But how did you know I had arrived?' I asked.

"'My wife told me you were here.'

"'She must have seen me, then,' I said.

"'Yes, she saw you. She saw you arrive last night at the station. And she saw you later, standing under an electric lamp, in front of the Cathedral.'

"This struck me as odd, for I had purposely waited till near midnight before going to the Cathedral, that I might see the exterior in the light of the moon; and I had been confident that not a soul was about.

"'How is she?' I asked, for I remembered my previous impression that she was an invalid.

“‘Oh, much better,’ he answered; ‘in fact, quite restored. It’s a great comfort.’

“‘It was very kind of her to send you to look for me,’ I said. ‘Perhaps I shall have the pleasure of seeing her later on in the day—and your daughter as well. You remember I congratulated you on your two sweethearts?’

“‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘and you were not far wrong in that. But wouldn’t you like to take a turn round the old town first? It’s a wonderful place and full of interest. And I know it through and through.’

“I was greatly puzzled by his manner. His speech and address were certainly remarkable for a working man; and I confess that for a moment the thought crossed my mind that he was some sort of impostor, and that I should be well advised to have nothing to do with him. I suppose it was his basket of roses that reassured me.

“‘Well,’ I said, ‘I’ve seen a good deal already. But I’ve no objection to seeing it all again. I’ll put myself in your hands.’

“‘Splendid!’ he cried. ‘It’s an ideal day, and I’m hungering for sunlight and beauty, and thirsting for the peace of ancient memories. And it will please my wife to know that I’ve taken you round. What do you say to going up the river first? There’s a glorious reach beyond the bridge. And the sun’s in the right position to give you the best view of the Cathedral.’

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"‘Nothing would please me better,’ said I; and we set off at once toward the river.

"On passing a certain building he bade me carefully examine the roof, the form of which was remarkable. While I was engaged in so doing, unconscious for a moment of his presence, I suddenly seemed to hear him groan behind me; and turning round I saw that he was holding tight to the iron railings on the other side of the foot-walk, and swaying his body backward and forward, as though he were in pain.

"‘Are you ill?’ I asked, in some alarm.

"‘Not at all. This is only my way of resting when I’m tired. Come along.’

"‘That’s a splendid lot of roses in your basket,’ I said, as we took our places in the boat, he sculling and I steering. ‘Frau Carl Druschki, unless I’m much mistaken.’

"‘Yes. I grew them on my allotment. I’m taking them home to my wife.’

"For some time we talked roses. He had a theory of pruning, which differed from mine, and led to a good deal of argument. Finally, he dropped his sculls, and, taking a piece of paper from his pocket, drew on it the diagram of a rose-bush pruned according to his method. We had forgotten the Cathedral.

"I took his drawing and began to criticize. ‘Oh!’ he said, ‘let’s drop it. We’re missing one of the

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noblest sights in England. Look at that!’ And he pointed to the heights.

“As we dropped down the river half an hour later, my companion, who had been silent for some time, again broke out on the subject of roses. ‘Rose-growing is a thing that takes time and patience and thought,’ he said. ‘More perhaps than it’s worth. If it were not for my wife, I should give it up. She’s desperately fond of roses.’

“‘That’s the best of reasons for not giving it up,’ I answered. ‘I happen to be a great admirer of your wife.’

“‘That’s another link between us,’ said he. ‘She’s the best wife man ever had. She’s worthy of all the admiration you can give her.’

“‘She’s worthy of all the roses you can grow for her,’ I said.

“‘By God, she is!’ he answered with an emphasis that startled me.

“We grew confidential, and a story followed. He told me that he was the illegitimate son of a baronet; that his father had made him an allowance to study art in London; that he had married his model, in opposition to the wishes of his father; that the baronet had thereupon thrown him over for good and all; that he had failed to make a living by his original art; that he had got an engagement with a great furnishing-house as a skilled painter; that he was earning four pounds a week in doing artistic work in rich

men's houses and elsewhere; that he was now engaged in restoring some fifteenth-century frescoes in a parish church. His wife earned money too, though he did not tell me how, and his daughter was being trained as a singer. 'We're all more or less in art,' he said, 'and we are a very happy family.'

"By this time we were back at the landing-place, and as the man stepped ashore he said: 'It's about time I took these roses to my wife. We'll just walk along to where I live, and I'll show you the rest of the sights afterwards. I'll take you to the Cathedral when the afternoon service is over.'

"As we walked through the streets the man kept up an incessant stream of talk, pointing to this and that, and discoursing with great eagerness on the history and antiquities of the town. It struck me as strange that he never waited for any answer but passed from one thing to another without a pause. Presently we stopped in front of a small house, one of a row of villas.

"'This is where I live,' he said, and stopped on the doorstep.

"'Good!' I cried; 'and now you will take me in and reintroduce me to your charming wife.'

"'I'm sorry,' he answered, 'but the thing's quite impossible.'

"I was so startled by this unexpected answer that, without thinking, I blurted out the question, 'Why?'

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“‘*Because,*’ he said, ‘*she’s in her coffin. She died at four o’clock this morning.*’

“At the words he sank down on his doorstep, put the basket of roses on his knees and bowed himself over them in a passion of tears.

“The door opened, and the young girl, who had been with me in the train, ran down the steps. Sitting down beside her father she put arms round his neck and said, ‘Daddy, Daddy, don’t cry!’ ”

The Professor ceased and there was a long pause.

“Did you discover,” said the Pessimist at length, “why the two were weeping in the train?”

“No need to ask that,” said our Hostess. “The woman had received sentence of death.”

“Did you ever follow it up?” said the Historian. “What, for example, became of the young girl?”

“*She was married to my eldest son last month,*” said the Professor.

“I knew the Pessimist’s introduction would not be needed,” said our Host.

“Nevertheless, it was the introduction that reminded me of the story,” said the Professor. “And now,” he continued, “can anyone here explain to me the strange conduct of the man with the white roses? For I confess that I can find no place for it in any system of Psychology known to me.”

At this question the Son of the House, who for some reason had become the gravest member of the

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party, looked up and seemed about to speak. But as he raised his eyes they met the bright glance of his pretty cousin, on whose cheek there was a tear. And when the Son of the House saw that, the impulse to speech died within him.

No one else ventured an explanation. But my impression was that there were two persons in the room to whom the strange conduct of the man with the white roses presented no enigma.

IV

THE HOLE IN THE WATER-SKIN

FOR the fourth time that day Abdulla, the water-seller of Damascus, had come to the river's bank to fill his water-skin. The day was hot beyond endurance; the drinkers had been clamorous and trade had been brisk; and a bag of small money, the fruits of his merchandise, hung within the folds of his gaberdine.

Weary with going to and fro in the burning streets, Abdulla seated himself under a palm tree, the last of a long line that ran down to the pool where the skins were filled. Resting his back against the cool side of the tree, the setting sun being behind him, he drew forth his bag and counted his coins. "One more journey," he said to himself, "and the bag will be full. Zobeida shall have sweetmeats to-morrow."

The pleasing thought lingered in his mind; fled for a moment and then returned; Abdulla saw the shop of the infidel Greek, with boxes of chocolate in the window; he saw himself inside making his choice among innumerable boxes, and holding the

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bag of money in his hand. Then his head fell forward on his chest and he was asleep.

The plunge into sleep had been so sudden, and its duration was so brief, that no memory of it was left, and Abdulla knew not that he had slept nor the moment when he awaked. Fluctuating images rose and wavered and vanished; and then, as though in answer to a signal, the incoherence ceased, the forms became defined, and a steady stream of consciousness began to flow.

He was conscious of the figure of a man in the foreground whose presence he had not previously noticed. The man was sitting motionless on a low rock less than a stonecast distant, and close to the river's brim; and he seemed to be watching the still flow of the stream. A moment later he stood upright, turned round, and crossed the fifty paces of sand that lay between him and Abdulla.

As the man drew nearer, Abdulla observed that he bore a bewildering resemblance to himself. Not many minutes before he had been looking at his own reflection in a small pocket mirror which he had purchased that morning from a Jew as a present for Zobeida; and as he looked at the image, still thinking of Zobeida, he wished that God had bestowed upon him a countenance of nobler cast. The face he now saw before him was the face he had just seen in the mirror, with the nobler cast introduced;

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and Abdulla, noticing the difference as well as the resemblance, was afraid.

"Depart from me, O my master," said he, "for I am a man of no account." And he bowed himself to the ground before the stranger.

"Rise," said the other, "and make haste; for the sun is low, and scarce an hour remains for thy merchandise. Dip thy water-skin into the stream; and, as thou dippest, think on the hour of thy death, when the All-merciful will dip into the river of thy life, and thou shalt sleep for the twinkling of an eye, and know not when thou awakest, and there shall be no mark left on thee, even as no mark is left on the river when thou hast filled thy water-skin from its abundance."

"I know not what thou sayest," said Abdulla, "for I am a poor man and ignorant."

"Thou art young," said the other, "and there is time for thee to learn. Hear, then, and I will enlighten thee. Everything hath its double, and the double is redoubled again. To this world there is a next before and a next after, and to each next a nearest, through a counting that none can complete. Worlds without end lie enfolded one within another like the petals of a rose; and as the fragrance of one petal penetrates and intermingles with the fragrance of all the rest, so is the vision of the world thou seest now blended with the vision of that which was and of that which is to come. And I

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tell thee, O thou seller of water, that between this world and its next fellow the difference is so faint that none save the enlightened can discern it. A man may live a thousand lives, as thou hast already done, and dream but of one. Again thou shalt sleep and again thou shalt awake, and the world of thy sleeping shall differ from the world of thy waking no more than thy full water-skin differs from itself when two drops of water have fallen from its mouth."

"Thou speakest like a devotee," answered Abdulla. "The matter of thy discourse is utterly beyond me, save for that thou sayest concerning the dipping of the water-skin. There thy thought is as the echo of mine own. But know that I am ashamed in thy presence; and again I entreat thee to depart." And Abdulla bowed himself as before.

"Do, then, as I bid thee," said the man; "dip thy skin in the water of the flowing river, think on the hour of thy death, and forget not as thou dippest to pronounce the name of God."

Then Abdulla rose up and did what he was commanded. While he was dipping the skin he tried to think of the hour of his death; but he could think only of the words, and dying seemed to him a thing of naught; for he was young and Zobeida was fair. Nevertheless, when he had lifted the full skin from the river, and saw that his taking left no mark, an

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old thought came back to him, and for the thousandth time he began to wonder at the ways of flowing water. "Only God can understand them," he murmured. "May the Compassionate have mercy upon the ignorant!"

Then he adjusted the burden on his back and turned to the palm-belt. But the stranger was gone.

As one who walks in sleep, Abdulla retraced the path on which for more than half the year he came and went three or four times a day. Now he pondered the words of his visitant; now the image of flowing water rose and glided before the inner eye.

He passed under the gate of the city without noting where he was. But here a sudden jostle interrupted his reverie. A man driving a string of donkeys thrust him against the wall, cursing him as he passed. Abdulla looked up and, when he heard the curses, repeated the name of God as a protection against evil.

Re-settling the water-skin in the position from which it had been displaced by the collision with the donkey, he took up the thread of his musing and went on. He thought of Zobeida, of the Cadi, of the contract of marriage, of the sweetmeats he would purchase on the morrow, of the shop of the Greek. But again his reverie was broken; this time by the sound of his own voice. The cry of his trade had burst automatically from his lips: "Water; sweet

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water! Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come and buy!"

A vision lay before him, and he seemed to be gazing at it from a point in mid-air. He saw a street in Damascus; the crowd is coming and going, the merchants are in their shops, and some are crying their wares. Close by the door of a house a boy is holding forth a wooden bowl, and in front of him a water-seller is in the act of opening his water-skin. Abdulla watches the filling of the bowl, and sees the man put forth his hand to take the coin the boy is offering. The man touches the coin and instantly becomes Abdulla himself. Abdulla closes his water-skin and replaces it on his back, not without a momentary sense of bewilderment. He observes also that some of the water is spilt on the ground. But he has no memory of the spilling.

Abdulla would fain have questioned himself. But he found no question to ask and could not begin the interrogation. Something seemed to have disturbed him, but so completely had it vanished that he could give the disturbance neither form nor name. Otherwise the chain of his memory was unbroken. He had finished his last round for the day; scarce a cup of water remained in the skin, and as he flung the flaccid thing over his shoulder he began to recall, one by one, the names and faces of his customers, forty in all, reflecting with satisfaction the last skinful had brought him the best gains of

the day. Then he remembered the driver of donkeys who had thrust him against the wall, and, examining the skin, found that it was frayed almost to bursting. And Abdulla uttered a curse on the driver of donkeys and turned homewards.

His road lay through narrow streets, crowded with people, and as he passed down one of them a veiled woman cried to him from the door of a hovel.

"O compassionate water-seller, I have two children within who are sore athirst, for the fever is burning them. Give them, I pray thee, a mouthful of water, and Allah shall recompense thee in Paradise."

"Woman," said Abdulla, "there is less water in the skin than would suffice to cool the tongue of a soul in hell. Nevertheless, what I have I will give thee." And he lowered the mouth of his water-skin into the woman's bowl.

Not a drop came forth. In vain Abdulla shook the skin and pressed the corners between the palms of his hands. Then, discovering what had happened, he began to curse and to swear.

"By the beard of the Prophet," he cried, "the skin has burst! A driver of donkeys, begotten of Satan, thrust me against the wall at the entering in of the city, and frayed the water-skin. And now, by the permission of God, the heat has dried up the remnant of the water and cracked the skin, thus completing the work of the Deviser of Mischief. Alas,

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alas! for the skin was borrowed. And to-morrow restitution will be demanded, for the lender is likewise a son of the Devil, and the bowels of mercy are not within him."

"Verily thou raisest a great cry for a small evil," said the woman. "Bethink thee of them who are perishing with thirst, and hold thy peace."

"Nay, but I am mindful of them," said Abdulla; "for had not the water-skin been burst, I would have had the wherewithal to give them to drink. But know, O mother of sorrows, that the motives of mankind are of a mixed nature, especially when grief oppresses them. And my griefs are greater than thou deemest. Woe is me! Behold this bag of money, and raise thy voice with mine in lamentation over the miseries of the unfortunate. A damsel, more beautiful than the full moon seen beyond the summits of waving palms, is at this hour hungering for the sweetmeats of the infidel, even as the children of thy body are thirsting for water; and within this bag is the money which, by the favor of Allah, would have purchased abundance of all that her soul desireth. But ere to-morrow's sun has risen from the edge of the desert, four coins out of every five will be claimed as damages by the lender of the skin (whom may the Prophet utterly reject!), the rest being reserved for the daily food which the All-merciful provides for his creatures. And the damsel will sit in the corner of the house, rocking

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her goodly body, which was created for the angels to gaze upon; and she will bite her hands and beat them on the wall, and wail for the sweetmeats that come not, and curse the name of Abdulla, the breaker of vows!"

"Most excellent of water-sellers," said the woman, "many are the damsels in this city addicted to the sweetmeats of the infidel, and of those that are beautiful as the full moon beyond the waving palms there are not a few. Thy description, therefore, availeth not for the identification of thy beloved. Describe her more narrowly, I beseech thee, that hereafter, when my children are dead, I may bring her the balm of consolation. For I am afflicted in her woes; and between women in sorrow there is ever a bond."

"Yea, verily," answered Abdulla. "I will so describe my beloved that thou shalt recognize her among ten thousand. Know, then, that her form is like unto a minaret of ivory built by the Waters of Silence in a king's garden; her eyes are as lighted lamps in the house of the Enchanter; the flowing of her hair is a troop of wild horses pursued by Bedouîn in the wilderness of Arabia; and the fragrance of her coming is like an odor of precious nards wafted on the evening breeze from the Islands of Wak-Wak."

"O Abdulla," replied the other, "of a truth I know this damsel. And now I perceive that the

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Devourer of Bliss hath taken thee in his net and multiplied thy sorrows upon thy head. But forget not the grief of this thy handmaid, and the suffering of those she has nursed at the breast. Hear even now the wailing that is within! Lo, a worker of spells has sent destruction among us, and the sickness is sore in the habitations of the poor. Press, then, thy skin once more, if peradventure Allah may have left there one drop of water, that the mouth of the little ones may be moistened before they die. And add a curse, I pray thee, on the Worker of Spells; for the Giver of Gifts hath made thy tongue of great alacrity, and taught thee the putting-together of wise judgments and the rounding-off of memorable sayings."

By this time a crowd, attracted by the cries and the cursing, had gathered round the speakers, and so thick was the press that Abdulla had much ado to move his hands that he might press the water-skin as he was bidden.

"O wise and much-enduring woman," he cried, "I greatly fear me that thy prayer is vain. But I will even do as thou biddest, if only these foolish ones will make room that I may pass my hands craftily over the skin. Thereafter I will add a goodly curse on the Worker of Spells, and at the last thou and I and all this multitude will wail and lament together, that the heart of the All-merciful may be moved to pity and his will turned to work us good."

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So spake Abdulla, and the crowd began to give way. But, behold, a marching squad of soldiery, going to the war, with drums beating and bayonets all aflash, suddenly swings down the street, filling its whole breadth from side to side. Instantly the crowd backs, and Abdulla and the woman, separated from one another, are swept along as driftwood by the torrent. Arrived in the open space into which the street discharged, Abdulla rushes hither and thither in search of the woman, examining every face in the crowd, and raising himself on tiptoe that he may look over their heads. But the woman is nowhere to be seen.

Perturbed by the sudden disappearance of the woman, Abdulla turned once more into the homeward way. Before he had taken many steps it occurred to him to examine the rent in his water-skin. Standing quite still and holding the skin at arm's length before him, he gazed intently at the small hole, about the size of an olive-stone, which had resulted from the donkey-driver's assault. As he thus gazed, the incident which had so abruptly terminated a few minutes before seemed to retreat into the distant past. Then it became a story, heard he knew not where, about a water-seller who lived long ago. Next, it seemed a dream of the night before, the details of which he could not recall. Finally, it vanished from his memory altogether.

Abdulla, realizing that it was gone, turned quickly

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and found, with some surprise, that he was standing in front of a large shop with plate-glass windows, behind which were boxes of chocolate arranged in rows. A mirror—at least it seemed so to Abdulla,—of equal length with the shop front, was set at the back and doubled the objects in the window.

The sight of the sweetmeats instantly brought back the memory of his misfortunes, and, in so doing, gave an occasion to the Tempter.

“I will conceal what has happened from the lender of the skin,” thought Abdulla. “I will insert a cunning patch, which will assuredly burst so soon as the skin is filled with water, and I will then swear by God and the Prophet that the skin was patched when I borrowed it. And now I will go in and bargain with the infidel for yonder box, the circumference whereof is wide as the belly of a well-fattened sheep.”

Raising his eyes from the great box of chocolates, Abdulla’s attention was strangely arrested by the reflection of his own face and figure in the mirror at the back of the shop front. He noted, with a start, the unwonted dignity of the figure as thus presented, and immediately recalled the man who had accosted him but lately by the Water-sellers’ Pool.

Abdulla gazed on what was before him, and thought thus within himself. “Of a truth I knew not that Allah had bestowed so dignified a counte-

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nance on the least worthy of his servants. The eyes are the eyes of eagles; the nose is a promontory looking seawards; the brow is a tower of brass built for defense at the gateway of a kingdom. Verily, the mirror of Zobeida must have been at fault. Surely God hath now provided me, in my own countenance, with the means of endearment, and the sweetmeats of the infidel are needed not. Moreover, it becometh not one thus favored to deal crookedly with the followers of the Prophet. Is Abdulla a man of violence, as the driver of the donkey; or a man of no bowels, as the lender of the skin? Is he an accursed Greek or a more accursed Armenian that he should play the cheat with his neighbor, inserting a cunning patch, which will assuredly produce leakage and make the rent worse than before? God forbid! Abdulla is a man of pure occupation, even as yonder image reveals him. Nevertheless, it may be that the Author of Deception has fashioned a lying picture in the mirror, that he may cause me to forego the purchase of the box, and undo me with the beloved, who will soil her cheeks with rivers of tears, and rock her body in the corner of the house. Go to, now; I will see whether the Evil One be not hidden behind the mirror; or if, perchance, there be not here some witchcraft contrivance of the Franks."

So thinking, Abdulla stepped into the entry of the shop, that he might examine the back of the mirror. What was his astonishment on discovering that

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there was no mirror at all, the boxes of chocolate he had taken for reflections being just as real as all the rest.

The Greek proprietor, suspecting him to be a thief, rushed out to apprehend him. He was too late, for Abdulla had fled into the darkness.

The sudden night had fallen; aloft, in a firmament of violet-black, the great stars were shining, and Damascus was still.

Pursuing his way, Abdulla found himself in front of a lofty house with a solitary latticed window immediately beneath the roof. It was the appointed hour. Presently a handkerchief was waved from between the lattice, and the soft voice of a woman began to speak.

"O Abdulla, my beloved," said the voice, "though it be dark in the street, yet there is a light round about thee so that I can see thy countenance as if it were noonday. Wherefore hast thou anointed thyself with radiance, and made thyself to shine like the sons of the morning? Where hast thou been? For thy fashion is passing strange, and my heart turns to water at the sight of thee."

"I have been," said Abdulla, "in the company of the wise, who have taught me the way of understanding, and shown me all knowledge, and opened the dark things that are hidden in the secret parts of the earth. All day have I conversed with en-

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lightened and honorable men, and they have made me the chief of their company and the father of their sect."

"Begone, then," answered the woman, "for I know thee not, and thy comeliness makes me afraid. I had deemed that thou wert Abdulla, the seller of water; and I am even now prepared to let down a basket that he may place therein the thing for which my soul is an hungered, even the sweetmeats of the infidel, which I would then draw up again with a cord of silk, and be refreshed after my manner. But as for the ways of understanding, thou mayest tread them alone, and the opening up of that which is hidden is a thing that my soul hateth."

"O thou that speakest behind the lattice," said Abdulla, "thy discourse is of matters that lack importance in the eyes of the sagacious. I perceive thou art possessed by a demon, and surmise that the Whetter of Appetite is leading thee in the path of destruction. Retire, therefore, to thy inner chamber, and recite quickly the Seven Exorcisms and the Two Professions of Faith."

"O Abdulla, if indeed thou art he," replied the voice, "I discern thou art contending for a purpose. Peradventure, the eyes of the wanton have entangled thee in the way, and thou hast bestowed on another that which, when thy heart was upright, thou designedst for me. Come now and prove thine integ-

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rity, for I will presently let down the basket that thou mayest fill it with the delicacies of the Franks."

"Thou fallest deeper into the snares of the demon," said Abdulla, "and thy voice soundeth afar off, even as the voice of one crying for water from the flames of the nethermost pit. Know that he to whom thou speakest is of them that walk in the light; and what have these to do with the delicacies of the Franks? Verily, I understand not thy topic, having heard but a rumor thereof among the conversations of the ignorant."

"O despiser of the knowledge that sweetens life," said the woman, "verily, I deem thee a man of limited information and degenerate wit. But hearken unto my words, and I will enlighten thee concerning the topic of our discourse, that ignorance may excuse thee no further. Know, then, that the delicacies of the Franks are of many kinds, arranged in boxes that are tied with silver cords. And the chief of them all is a thing of two natures, cunningly blended, whereof one nature appertaineth to the outer shell, and the other to the inner substance. The outer shell tasteth bitter, and the color is of the second degree of blackness, like unto the skin of the Ethiopian eunuch. The inner substance is sweeter than the honeycomb, and white as the wool of Helbon, interspersed with all manner of nuts. This is the chief among the delicacies of the Franks; and such is the marvel of the blending of the natures

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that the palate knoweth neither the bitterness of the shell, nor the sweetness of the kernel, but a third flavor of more eminent rank, to which Allah hath appointed no name. Hie thee, therefore, O man of no excuse, and buy from them that sell."

"That for which thou askest," said Abdulla, "is utterly beneath the dignity of the enlightened to give thee. Ask for the wisdom of the ancients and thou shalt have it. Ask for the revelation of things hidden, and it shall be accorded thee. But the delicacies of the Franks, cunningly blended as to their two natures, and arranged in boxes that are tied with silver cords, shalt thou in no wise receive."

"O raiser of false expectations," cried the lady, "and betrayer of her that has trusted thee, among all the sons of Adam there is none more utterly contemptible than thou. In the dignity of thy carriage thou appearest unto me as a thing abhorred; I like not thy wisdom; I have no fellowship with thy knowledge, and I despise the insolent shining of thy inner light."

"O woman of a light mind and a debased appetite," said Abdulla, "thy wits have gone astray, and thou babblest like one asleep, confounding the things that are not with the things that are. Abdulla, the water-seller, of whom thou speakest, is long numbered with the dead, and the waters of forgetfulness have flowed over his record. Only this day I heard afar off the last rumor which the world hath

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concerning him. And this was the rumor: that, on a day, perceiving one athirst in the byways, Abdulla gave him freely three drops of water from the dregs of his water-skin, thereby earning the favor of Allah (whose name he exalted!) and the promise of Paradise. But going forth in the way he met a man having the Evil Eye; and lo, it straightway entered into the heart of Abdulla to fill his water-skin with the sweetmeats of the infidel, that he might find favor in the eyes of a frivolous woman—even one such as thou art. And God (than whom there is no other!), being angered at the folly of Abdulla, made a hole in the skin, and sent forth the Terminator of Delights to end his days. So the water-seller died, and the weight of his water-skin, laden with sweetmeats, went forth with his soul. And this, being heavy, dragged him down to the place of darkness, where the sweetmeats fell out through the hole in the skin and were eaten of devils.”

At this the woman banged-to the lattice and disappeared.

Abdulla started at the sound of the closing lattice. He was in a standing posture on the roof of his house. The mat on which he slept was tossed into a heap, and the empty water-skin, which served him for a pillow, had been thrown some yards from its place. Abdulla looked over the parapet eastwards; and he saw the desert rose-red in the dawn.

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For a long time Abdulla walked to and fro on the roof of his house pondering the things that had happened to him both in the day and the night. To piece the story together was no easy matter, for there were gaps in his memory, and, though some of the incidents were clear, others were perplexingly dim. Moreover, the incidents that were clear seemed to change places with those that were dim, so that the line between his dreams and his waking experiences was now in one place and now in another. He could not be sure, for example, that the fraying of his water-skin belonged to the one class rather than the other, and so rapid was the transition from conviction to doubt that he examined the skin no less than five times to satisfy himself the hole was there.

The longer he meditated on these things the greater became his confusion of mind, and by the time the sun was fully risen from the desert, he was well-nigh distracted and beginning to doubt of his own identity. In vain did he repeat the Seven Exorcisms, the Four Prayers, the Tecbir, the Adan, and the Two Professions of Faith, calling on the name of Allah between the exercises, and extolling His majesty every time. At last Abdulla began to wring his hands and to cry aloud like one bereft of intelligence.

While thus lamenting, it suddenly seemed to him that one from a far distance was calling him by name. Checking his cries, he listened. The voice

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came nearer and nearer, and presently broke out in familiar tones at his very side.

"What aileth thee, O Abdulla?" said the voice. "Hast thou partaken of the intoxicating drug? Has the Evil Eye encountered thee? Or sufferest thou from a visitation of God?"

"O my mother," answered Abdulla, "there is none else besides thee under heaven who can ease my pain and give me counsel in my perplexity. The sound of thy voice is to me like running waters to him that perisheth of thirst. Know that a great bewilderment has overtaken me, so that I discern no more the things that are not from the things that are."

"That which was foreordained has come to pass," said the woman. "Thou wast marked on thy forehead in the hour of thy birth; and I saw it, and knew that things hidden from the foundation of the earth would be revealed unto thee. Lo, the mark is on thy forehead still. O Abdulla, my son, thou art no longer a seller of water, but a seer of the Inner Substance, and divulger of secrets."

"O my mother," said Abdulla, "I know not what thou sayest. The Inner Substance is a thing whereof I have never heard, and there is no secret that I can divulge. Only a dream of the night season has troubled me, and even now it seemeth to mingle with the things that God makes visible, so that the

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desert floats like a yellow cloud, and thine own form undulates before me like the morning mist."

"Thy confusion," said the woman, "is caused by the intermingling of the worlds, which few among the sons of Adam are permitted to note; and the undulations that bewilder thee are made by the river of Time. What thou seest is the passing of that which was into that which is, and of that which is into that which is to be. But rouse thy mind quickly, O my son, and betake thyself on the instant to a skilful Interpreter of Dreams, that the matter be resolved."

"I hear and obey," said Abdulla; and he ran down the steps of his house into the street.

As he passed through the door, Selim the courier called to him from the other side.

"O thou that dwellest alone," cried Selim, "hast thou taken to thyself a wife? Hast Zobeida proved gracious?"

"Nay, verily," answered Abdulla. "I have broken a vow and Zobeida rejecteth me utterly. And know, O Selim, that I am a man sore troubled with dreams in the night season, so that a spirit of amazement hath possessed me, and I discern not the light from the darkness, nor the shadow from the substance."

"Thou tellest a strange thing," said Selim. "Nevertheless, I heard thee speaking scarce a moment gone with one on the roof."

"My mother was come from the lower parts of the house to comfort me," said Abdulla, "and it was with her that I spake."

"Verily, thou art bewitched," answered the other. "More than twenty years have passed since thy mother entered into the Mercy of God, and her body is dust within the tomb."

Abdulla's answer was a piteous cry. He leaned for support against the wall of his house, spreading out his hands like one who would save himself from falling.

"O Selim," he cried, "I am encompassed with forgetfulness, and my heart is eradicated within me. Said I not unto thee that I discern no more between the darkness and the light, between the shadow and the substance? But I swear to thee, by the beard of the Prophet, that she with whom I spake was the mother who bore me. She stretched out her arms towards me and touched the mark on my forehead, and bade me hasten to the Interpreter of Dreams that the matter might be resolved."

"It is a sign from Allah," said Selim; "and I doubt not that thou wilt die the death at the hand of the infidel and be received into Paradise. For know that thou hast been called two days ago, and the sergeant is even now seeking for thee."

"That also I had forgotten," said Abdulla. "I will hasten forthwith to the Interpreter of Dreams,

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and thereafter I will report me to the sergeant. And the rest shall be as Allah willeth."

And Abdulla passed on his way to the Interpreter of Dreams.

Suddenly he realised that his path was blocked by a crowd, and looking up he saw above him, on the other side of the street, the lattice of Zobeida. "Verily," he thought, "I have made a long circuit; for this house lieth not in the way."

Loud cries were coming from the house, mingled with curses and the sound of hands beaten against the wall. As soon as Abdulla appeared, one of the crowd called out towards the lattice:

"O woman that criest in the darkness, come now to the light, that we may hear thy maledictions more plainly, and be refreshed by the beauty of thy countenance. Lo, he who is thy enemy passeth even now beneath the window. Come forth, then, and the sight of him shall be as a fire in thy bones, inspiring thy tongue to the invention of disastrous epithets and calamitous imprecations. And we, on our part, will hold him fast, even the accursed Abdulla, that he run not away till his destiny is pronounced and his doom completed."

At this the lattice was burst open, and Zobeida, tearing aside her veil, displayed a countenance of wrath. Her hair was dishevelled, her cheeks were soiled with ashes and tears, her eyes were like coals

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of fire, and her voice hissed and rang like the sword of a slayer in the day of battle.

"O Abdulla," she cried, "of a truth thou art the Emperor of liars and the Sultan of rogues. May the Abaser of Pride rub thy nose in the dust!"

"O my mistress," answered Abdulla, "impose upon thyself, I beseech thee, the obligation of good manners."

"Dog and son of a dog—" cried Zobeida. But Abdulla heard no more. A distant confusion of sounds had arisen. It drew nearer with amazing rapidity, and finally broke forth into the tramp of marching feet, the rumbling of wheels, and the booming of a drum. The houses melted away, the sound of Zobeida's voice grew fainter and fainter, and the knot of bystanders was gone.

Abdulla sprang to attention and looked about him. He was in the main street of the city, and opposite was the house of the Interpreter of Dreams. Coming down the street was a regiment of Turkish infantry, with a battery of guns following behind. And a dim memory passed, like a swift shadow, over the mind of Abdulla.

For an instant he was bemused, and one who passed by heard him muttering broken words. "The long way round," he murmured; "the lattice of Zobeida—a caravan of camels laden with sweetmeats—dog and the son of a dog." Then a wind passed over his face, and it seemed to him that he

had been thinking foolishly. "Well for me," he replied, "that I went not round by the house of Zobeida. For the time is short and I too am called." And with that he crossed over, making haste that he might reach the other side before the marching column blocked the street.

The house of the Interpreter was built after the European fashion, and on the door was a large brass knocker after the manner of the Franks. Abdulla stretched forth his hand, and was about to raise the knocker when one plucked him by the sleeve. Turning round he saw a man in the uniform of an officer of artillery.

"Wherefore hast thou not reported thyself?" said the officer. "Thy name was called two days ago, and verily thou runnest a risk of being shot."

"O my master, a bewilderment hath overtaken me," said Abdulla, "so that I forget all things and know not the day from the night. Lo, even now, I seek the Interpreter of Dreams that the matter may be resolved."

"Thou art in a way to have thy dreams interpreted by a bullet through the brain," said the officer. "Leave then thy dreaming and hold thy peace; or, by Allah, I will proclaim thy cowardice forthwith and order thy arrest. Fall in!"

Abdulla had no choice. A moment later he was marching in step with a squad of reservists who followed in the rear of the guns.

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As the column passed down the street a veiled woman stepped out from the edge of the crowd, and, taking three paces by the side of Abdulla, whispered in his ear:

“Play the man.”

They were now at the station, entraining for the seat of war. The carriages were crowded with shouting soldiery, and many, unable to find room within, had clambered on the roofs. Among these was Abdulla crouching silent.

Suddenly a man in European costume forced his way along the platform and called him by name.

“Art thou Abdulla, the water-seller of Damascus?” said the man.

“I am he.”

“Come down, then, that I may speak with thee. And hasten, for the time is short.”

“Stay thou behind and let these go,” said the European, when Abdulla had descended from the roof. “I will purchase thy release from the Pasha. Nay, the matter is already arranged, and none of these will hinder thee if thou stayest.”

“And wherefore should I do this?” asked Abdulla.

“For a weighty and good reason,” said the European. “Know that the fame of thee has reached to London, to Paris, to New York. Thou art spoken of as one who hath a power upon thee which may aid in opening up the things that have been hidden

from the foundation of the earth. And the probers of secrets have sent me that I may search thee out, and engage thee at a great salary, and take thee with me to the seats of the learned and the cities of the West."

"Thou art in error," said Abdulla, "for power such as thou speakest of belongeth not to me. Of a truth, I am one who walketh in a great bewilderment, and the spirit of forgetfulness hath overpowered me. But withal I am a common man, of whom Allah hath created millions, and it was but yesterday I was seeking the Interpreter of Dreams, that I might pay him the fee and have the matter resolved."

"I am the Interpreter of Dreams whom thou soughtest," said the other, "and I dwell in the house built in the European fashion, with the great knocker of brass, after the manner of the Franks."

"Thy name?" said Abdulla.

"My name is Professor—" —but an escape of steam from the panting locomotive drowned the next word,—“and I am come from London to fetch thee."

"I go not with thee," said Abdulla, "for thou seemest to be one whom the Deluder of Intelligence is leading astray. I have but dreams to tell thee; and if thou wantest dreams, hast thou none of thine own? Verily, a dream is but a little thing."

"Thou errest," shouted the other—for Abdulla

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had now climbed back on to the roof, —“a dream is a thing more wonderful than aught else the Creator hath appointed, and there is none among the sons of Adam who understandeth the coming and the going thereof. But if thou wilt come with me—”

The Interpreter broke off in the middle of his sentence, for the train was moving out of the station, and he saw that Abdulla could no longer hear the words.

The battery to which Abdulla was attached lay in a hollow to the rear of the main battle awaiting orders to take up a position in the front. It was the first time he had been under fire. Dead bodies, horribly mangled, lay around, and a straggling throng of wounded men, some silent, some unmanned by agony, and all terrible to look upon, was passing by. As Abdulla saw these things, the fear of death grew strong within him. His body trembled and his face was blanched.

Seeing his state his companions began to deride him. Presently a gaily dressed officer, passing where he was, paused in front of him, and drawing a small mirror from his pocket held it in front of the trembling man, and said:

“Look in this, O Abdulla, and thou wilt see the face of a coward.”

Abdulla looked in the mirror and saw there the

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very face which had confronted him not long ago in the shop window of the Greek.

The soldiers around him burst into a roar of laughter as Abdulla looked in the mirror; but he heard them not.

He was busy in inward colloquy. "O thou that tremblest in thy body," he was saying to himself, "O Abdulla the coward, hearken unto me. Behold yon rider coming swiftly, and know, O thou craven carcase, that he bringeth the order to advance. Thinkest thou to stay behind, and then run away stealthily, and get thee back to thy water-selling in Damascus and to thy dallying with a woman? Yea, verily, thou thinkest it; and even now contrivest within thyself how thou mayest steal away and not be seen. But know thou that I who speak to thee will suffer not thy cowardice. I will force thee presently to carry thy trembling limbs to yonder line, whence come these whom thou seest in their pain. Thither will I take thee, and I will hold thee fast in a place where death cometh to four of every five. Not a step backward shalt thou go. Nay, rather, I will blow a flame through thy nostrils into the marrow of thy bones, driving thee forward, until I have thee firm in the very hottest of the fire. See, the signal rises! Hark, the trumpet sounds! Up then, thou quaking carrion, for thy hour is come.—Well done! Those behind thee are taking note that thou tremblest no more! By

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Allah, I have conquered thee and have thee utterly in my power!"

Every man was in his place. Abdulla, firm and ready, the rebuking voice now silent within him, sat on the leading gun-horse; the traces that bound it to the gun were already taut, and the whip-hand of the driver was aloft in air. The word is given, the whips descend, and the whole thundering train of men and beasts, with Abdulla at its head, sweeps forward to the place of sacrifice.

The battle was lost, and the long ridge on which Abdulla's battery had been posted was carpeted with dead and dying men. A pall of yellow smoke, broken from moment to moment by the flashes of exploding shrapnel, hung over the ridge, and a blazing house immediately behind the position shed a copper-coloured glare over the appalling scene. A cold and cursed rain was falling, and stricken men, in extremities of thirst, were lapping pools of water defiled with their own blood.

Of the twelve guns that formed the battery, all were dismantled save one, and by this there stood a solitary man, the only upright figure from end to end of the ridge. It was Abdulla. For five hours he had done his duty untouched by shot, shell, or bayonet. He had continued the service of his gun till the last round of ammunition was expended; and when a cry arose among the survivors that they

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should save themselves, he had watched the last stragglers depart and refused to stir from his post. And now he stood inactive and motionless, alone in a copper-coloured wilderness of agony and death.

Twice the enemy had attempted by desperate charges to storm the hill, and, save for the lull in the artillery fire which preceded these attacks, the work of death had hardly ceased for a moment. Even now it still went on, slaying those who were half slain. Unable to see clearly the state of things on the ridge, or behind it, and unaware that the defence was totally annihilated, the enemy had hardly slackened his fire. Scores of shrapnel were bursting overhead, and the singing of the rifle bullets was like the hum of bees in swarming time. As the shells exploded and the pitiless missiles came thrashing down, Abdulla noticed how, after each explosion, some portion of the human carpet would toss and undulate for a moment, as though the wind had got under it, and then subside again into its place. The numbness and exhaustion of other faculties had liberated his powers of observation, and at that moment they were abnormally acute.

Fear, even the memory of fear, had long departed, and of mental distress there was none, save a sense of immobility and powerlessness, such as a man may have in an ugly dream. Abdulla leaned on the wheel of the gun-carriage, gazing on the scene around him as a spectacle to be studied; and he

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watched the shells bursting overhead with no more concern than he would have felt for a passing flight of birds. He was aware of his utter loneliness, and now and then a slight stir of self-compassion would ripple the lucid depths of his consciousness. With a certain repugnance, also, he noticed the copper-coloured light, which shed its glare in every direction as far as he could see.

The tensest hours of his life, during which he had exerted his body with furious energy, and his senses had been incessantly assailed with every kind of shock, had ended in a feeling, amounting almost to conviction, that the events in which he had participated, the deeds he had done, and the spectacle now before him were the tissue of a dream.

Blustering facts that bludgeon and bombard the senses, often provoke us, by the very violence of their self-announcement to suspect them as illusory. Reality is a low-voiced, soft-footed thing; a mean between two extremes, clothed at all times in the garments of modesty and reserve, which neither strives nor cries nor lifts up its voice in the streets. But when the gods are drunk and the heavens in uproar, and the thing called "fact" is unrestrained, ranting and storming about the stage like an ill-mannered actor—then it is that the cup begins to pass away from us, and a still small voice whispers within that the whole performance is a masquerade.

Thus had it happened to Abdulla. Dreamer as

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he was, he had never yet been able to detect himself in the act of dreaming. But now the waking state was over-wakeful, and at the very moment when each nerve in his body was strung to utmost tension, and the sense organs in full commission, and fact in its most brutal form thundering on the gates of his mind, there came to him a calm that was more than vacancy, a conviction that he was in the land of dreams, and a peaceful foreshadowing that he would soon awake.

“And yet,” he thought, “it is weary work, this waiting for the spell to break. Ha, that one would have done it, had I stood a span further to the left! Why cannot they wake me? Are not a hundred pieces of artillery sufficient to rouse one solitary man from his dreams? Stay! What if I am wakened already? And what if this be hell? If so, is it so much worse than earth? But please Allah that I stand not thus for all eternity, waiting for the dream to pass. Ah! I was hit that time”—and he put his hand to the region of his heart. “A mere graze. Perhaps the next will do better. Allah send me a thing to do! Ho, thou Selim! Hast thou life in thee to stand upright and do a thing? I saw thee raise thyself a moment ago. If thou hast strength, bestir thyself a little, and thou and I will find another round, and fire a last shot before we pass.”

Selim the courier was lying behind the gun with

a dozen others, dead or wounded to death. Abdulla had hardly finished speaking when a shrapnel burst over the heap, and Selim, who had been lying face downward on the top, flung himself round in the last agony. As the bullets struck, the whole heap seemed to disperse, the bodies spreading outward into a ring with a hollow space in the midst.

Then Abdulla saw a thing that caused his heart to leap for joy. Lying in the hollow made by the dispersion of the bodies was a round of ammunition which some man had been carrying at the moment he was stricken down, and which had hitherto been covered up by the dead. At the sight of it, a sudden inspiration fell like a thunderbolt upon Abdulla's dream. The sense of immobility was gone. "By Allah, thou art alive and awake!" he cried, addressing himself. "Quick, thou slave of a body! Thou hast yet strength in thee to open the breech-piece of the gun, and the cartridge is not so heavy but that these arms can lift it. Up, then, and act!"

He sprang forward. Quick as thought he seized the cartridge and carried his burden back to the gun.

Then he stretched forth his hand to grasp the lever which controlled the mechanism of the breech. But before his fingers closed on the metal he paused for the briefest instant to look around him. In one glance he took in the whole scene in all its extent and detail—the long ridge under the copper-coloured light, the carpet of moaning or silent forms, the

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dead body of Selim, the dismantled guns, the valley below, the enemy's position on the further side, and the red spurts of flame from his artillery. He noted also that the rain had ceased and the setting sun had broken through the cloud.

Then, on a sudden, the vast view seemed to fall away into an immeasurable distance, and, as a landscape contracts when seen from the wrong end of the telescope, drew inwards from its edges with incredible rapidity until it occupied no more space than is enclosed by the circumference of the smallest coin. And in the same flash of time it was gone altogether.

As it went, Abdulla felt his fingers close on the cold metal.

They closed on the metal, and Abdulla saw without the least surprise that the thing he held in his hand was the knocker of brass on the door of the Interpreter of Dreams.

He knew no shock, asked himself no questions, perceived no breach of continuity. He lifted the knocker, and its fall sounded in the street of Damascus at the very instant when the boom of the bursting shell, which had blown the water-seller to fragments, was reverberating over Tchatalja.

Abdulla knocked. As he waited for the door to open he looked up and down the street. He had arrived in Damascus overnight, and his surround-

ings were yet strange to him. Nevertheless, as he continued to look at the houses and the passers-by, a suspicion crossed his mind that he had been in this place before. "Perhaps I have dreamed of such a place," he thought. "But surely the face of yonder man is familiar. Where did I see one like him? In Paris? In London? Ho thou, with the courier's badge on thine arm! A word with thee."

The man paused at the doorstep, and Abdulla looked him full in the face. Instantly his mind became confused, his tongue began to stammer, and he heard himself speaking of he knew not what. "Hast thou life in thee?" he said. "If so, bestir thyself and thou and I—" But the words broke off, and Abdulla stood mouthing.

"Thou babblest like one intoxicated," said the man. "May Allah preserve thy wits!" And he passed on.

The door opened, and Abdulla's mind became clear. A moment later he stood in the presence of the Interpreter of Dreams.

"Who art thou?" said the Interpreter, "and what is the occasion of thy coming?"

"I am a Cairene," said Abdulla, "born of Syrian parentage in this city, but taken hence when I was an infant of five years. I am come to Damascus for the purpose which thou and I have in common. I, too, am a student of dreams."

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"Of which kind?" asked the Interpreter. "For know that dreams are of two kinds: dreams of the worlds that were, and dreams of the worlds that are to be. Of which hast thou knowledge?"

"Of the world that was," said Abdulla.

"Thou hast chosen a thankless study," answered the other. "Few will trust thy discoveries. For a thousand who will believe thee if thou teachest of a world that is to be, there is scarce one who will listen if thou speakest of a world that was. But tell me thy history, and name thy qualifications."

"I have been educated in the Universities of the West," said Abdulla, "and there I sat at the feet of one who taught me a doctrine which he had learnt from a master of the ancient time. And the doctrine was this: that worlds without end lie enfolded one within the other like the petals of a rose; and the next world after differs from the next world before no more than a full water-skin differs from itself when two drops of water have fallen from its mouth. 'The world,' taught the master, 'is a memory and a dream, and at every stage of its existence it beholds the image of its past and the fainter image of its future reflected as in a glass.'"

"And why makest thou the world that was before of more account than the world that comes after?"

"I said not that I made it of more account," answered Abdulla, "but that my knowledge was of this rather than of that. But know that I am a

dreamer of dreams, and it is the world before that my dreams have revealed to me."

"Tell me thy dreams."

"It is of them that I came to speak with thee. There is one dream that ever recurrerth both in the day and the night. Seventy times seven have I seen a frayed water-skin, having a hole in a certain part, no larger than an olive-stone."

"That is a small matter," said the Interpreter, "and such things concern us not. But I suspect that thou art not at the end of thy story. For, verily, thou hast not travelled from the cities of the West to speak of a thing so slight. Say, therefore, what has brought thee to Damascus."

"That also I would tell thee; for it is a matter to be pondered. Thou art of the wise, and knowest, therefore, that there is a virtue in places and a power in localities. In one, the light of the soul is extinguished; in another, it is kindled; in one, the reason dies; in another, the half-thought becomes a whole, and the doctrine that is dimly apprehended becomes clear. Now, being in the city of Paris, I conversed with one of the French who had visited the holy places of his religion, where he had meditated in solitude and seen visions and dreamed dreams; and I told him that I had a doctrine newly born, half grown. 'O Abdulla,' he said, 'there is a virtue in places and a power in localities. Go thou, therefore, to the city of

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Damascus, for that is a place where, in days that are gone, the half-thought became a whole, and the doctrine dimly apprehended became clear. Put thyself on the way to Damascus and await the issue.'”

At these words the Interpreter rose from his seat and paced the room in thought.

“The man of whom thou speakest,” he said at length, “is known to me; and many are they whom he has guided to this place. Rightly sayest thou that there is a virtue in places and a power in localities. And here the power still lingers which the world lost when mankind took to babbling. Thy reason for coming hither is mine also. Seest thou not that I have made my dwelling in the Street that is called Straight?”

“I see and understand,” said Abdulla.

There was another pause, and again the Interpreter paced the room. Then he resumed:

“Between thee and me there is need of little speech to attain a comprehension, and the short sentence meaneth more than the long explanation. Nevertheless, I would fain hear the rest of thy story. Proceed, then, and tell me of the dreams that came to thee on the way to Damascus.”

“On the way itself,” said Abdulla, “there came no dreams. But this very day I sat by the bank of the river, full of thought, and methinks sleep overpowered me—though I know not. And there

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came a poor man carrying a water-skin, and I, looking upon him, saw that his face was like unto mine own, but marred by his toil and his poverty. And the man sat himself down, leaning against a palm-tree on the side away from the sun, and slept. Then I arose and stood before him, and expounded to him my doctrine, and he seemed as one that saw and heard, though asleep. And when his eyes were opened he saw me no more, but took up his water-skin and filled it at the river, making mention of the name of God.

"I followed him into the city, and saw one thrust him against the wall so that his water-skin was frayed. Thereafter the water-skin burst, and a hole appeared in a certain part the size of an olive-stone, and the remnant of the water flowed forth. But, passing a certain street, a woman called to him to give her little ones to drink. And I, being hard by, and seeming to know the woman, whispered to the man that he should pass his hands craftily over the skin, if peradventure a drop remained . . . moisten the lips of them that cried out for the thirst. But none remained, and the man went on his way sorrowing.

"Then I lost him for a while; but as night fell I found him again, standing in front of a glass window and meditating a thing that was dishonest. And the man looking through the window saw me stand-

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ing among the goods that were in the shop. Whereupon he changed his design and ran away.

"I wandered through the streets of the city, and passing by a certain house, a frivolous woman looked out from a lattice and reviled me. I understood not the things that she spake, and having answered the woman I departed. Then I bethought me that she had taken me for another, and, remembering that the face of the water-seller was like unto mine own, I surmised that it was he.

"Suddenly, I know not how, I found myself in a place of battle, armed like the rest, and, turning aside, I saw, standing among the harnessed horses of a gun-team, the man whose water-selling I had watched in the city. And the spirit of fear was upon him; his countenance was blanched and his body all aquake; and I, ashamed that one who bore my own semblance should stand disgraced among his fellows, rebuked him for his cowardice; and methought I blew a fire through his nostrils into the marrow of his bones. Then the man took courage and, mounting his horse with alacrity, went forward with the bravest to the place of death.

"Thereafter I saw him no more. But this very hour, even as I lifted thy knocker of brass, a great light shone round about me, a sound of thunder shook the air, and a voice said, 'Lo! thy broken water-skin is mended and full of water. Go forth, therefore, and give to them that are athirst.' Where-

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upon it seemed to me that the half-thought became a whole, and the doctrine that was dimly apprehended grew clear. And now I am a man prepared to go forward, even as he was into whom I blew the breath of courage on the field of death. A thing that was holding me back is gone from me, and lo! I am free."

"Perchance one has ministered unto thee, even as thou didst minister to that other in the hour when he was afraid," said the Interpreter.

"That may be," said Abdulla. "But did I not tell thee that as yet I have no knowledge of the world that will be?"

"The knowledge awaits thee, and will begin from this hour," said the Interpreter. "Most assuredly that which thou tellest is an image of the world that was; and he that dreameth of the one world dreameth also in due season of the other. But hearken now while I put thee to the question; and if thou answerest according to thy doctrine, peradventure the interpretation of thy vision will appear in the issue."

"Say on," said Abdulla.

"This, then, is the question. Thinkest thou, O Dreamer, that when a man dies and enters Paradise, he knows of his condition, as who should say, 'Lo, I am now a disembodied spirit, having just passed through the article of death, and these before me

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are the Gates of Heaven, and yonder shining thing is the Throne of God?"

"Nay, verily," said Abdulla, "in this and in every world the Throne of God is revealed after one and the same manner, and never shall it be seen in any world save by such as follow there the Loyal Path whereby it is found in this. And he who beholdeth not the Gates of Paradise in the world where he is, will look for them in vain in the world where he is to be."

"Art thou willing to think, then, that thou and I are in Paradise even at this hour?"

"Thou hintest at the doctrine that has been revealed to me," said the other. "It may be even as thou sayest. For certain am I that thou and I have died many deaths; and as there is another world in respect of this, so is this world another in respect of them that went before. Great is the error which deemeth that the number of the worlds is but two, and that death, therefore, cometh once only to a man, when he passeth from the first to the second. Of death, as of life, the kinds are innumerable; and of these, that which destroyeth the body at the end is only one, and perhaps not the chief. Whatsoever changeth into its contrary must needs die in the act; so that except one die, grief cannot pass into joy, nor darkness into light, nor evil into good; neither can the lost be found, nor

the sleeper awake. Wherefore it may be that thou and I are in Paradise even now."

"Thou speakest to the question," said the Interpreter. "Some there are, as thou sayest, who, being in Paradise already, will still be asking whether Paradise awaits them. And if the enlightened go thus astray, how much deeper is the ignorance of the darkened! For in no place, O Abdulla, is Hell more doubted of than in Hell itself."

"I have lived in the cities of the West and have observed that very thing," said Abdulla. "Many a damned soul have I heard making boast of his good estate, and many a doubt of Judgment shouted forth from the very flames of the Pit. For how shall a man know when he is now dead and come to Judgment? Doth he live in his dying, and, taking note of his last breath, say within himself, 'Lo, now I am dead'? And if he know not the single occasion of his dying, how should he remember even though death worketh upon him daily and passeth over him a thousand times?"

"Death and forgetting are one," said the Interpreter, "and the memory of dying perisheth like a dream. But some there are to whom Allah hath appointed a station at the place of passage and set as watchmen at the intermingling of the worlds. These pass to and fro over the bridges, gathering tidings from forgotten realms; and much of majesty and worth that escapeth the common sort is

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apparent unto them. And of such, O Abdulla, thy dreams declare thee to be one."

"Hast thou no further interpretation?" asked Abdulla.

"Hark!" said the other. "The full interpretation cometh even now."

And, as he spoke, the brass knocker sounded on the door.

V

THE POOR MAN'S PIG¹

THE people who say that modern ideas have not yet reached the agricultural labourer must be unacquainted with our Parliamentary Division.

Social unrest has certainly made its appearance in our midst. To be sure, we are as picturesque as we were a hundred years ago; our streams are unpolluted, our cottages are thatched, our beehives are made of straw, our front doors are flanked by tall hollyhocks and masses of marguerite. But our minds have changed. We are no longer content with nine shillings a week, though some of our employers think we ought to be. We learned to read and write in the days of the School Boards, despite the efforts of Farmer Taplin, who joined the Board for the express purpose of "putting a stopper on all this education." Farmer Taplin, however, may rest content; we have forgotten almost everything we learnt, and are dependent on Tom Mellon the waggoner, who never went to school

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at all, for reading out the jokes in *Comic Cuts*. We have also forgotten the old songs our fathers used to sing; but we know many others, learnt in the music-halls of the neighbouring town. We seldom go to church; certain of us have not been inside its walls for years. The reason is that we are sceptics; though, as a rule, we don't put it quite so bluntly as that. We say, "We don't 'old with these 'ere parsons." In politics most of us are Radicals, our employers being Tories to a man. And, what is more significant, a few of us are Socialists. As we pick up the sheaves behind the reaping machine we converse about these things and criticise the Social System, using phrases taught us by the emissaries of Reform. "The abolition of private property" comes quite easily to our once untutored lips. We point to the Massey-Harris reaper, which our employer's son (with a cigarette in his mouth) is driving, and say, "That there machine ought to belong to *us*"; only, we put an adjective before "machine" which I cannot print.

We have been informed on high authority that we are "wage-slaves"; but we know how to make things uncomfortable for our masters. We take it out of them in many ways. A young gentleman who came down from London to inspire our revolutionary ardour told us on the village green "that he would be very sorry for any labourer who was fool enough to be loyal to his master." He had no cause

to be sorry for us—at least, not on that account. For doing a job with the minimum of efficiency you will go far before you can find the equals of some of us. Through our artfulness or stupidity we have hastened the bankruptcy of several farmers in the neighbourhood. Machines have been broken and crops have been left uncut; valuable mares have miscarried, sheep have become infected, and fat cattle have died. We had a hand in most of it. Why should we exert ourselves to put profits into other people's pockets? That is what the young gentleman from London asked us. The only mistake he made was in supposing we had never thought of it before. Long before his arrival we had been discussing the point among ourselves. Indeed, when the young gentleman asked this question we felt our intelligence affronted, and one of us shouted, "Does your mother know you're out?" and it was only when our instructor went on to explain how shirking our jobs was "doing our duty to the working class" that we became reconciled to his presence on our village green.

Of course, we are not all Socialists; at least, not yet. But our numbers have increased. At the last Parliamentary election, out of a total electorate of 12,000, the Socialist candidate polled 500 votes, which was just enough to give the Tory the seat. At the election before that, when the Liberal got in,

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we polled only 150, which means that our vote has increased by about 300 per cent. in five years.

We attribute the increase mainly to the exertions of the young gentleman aforesaid, whose van had been going the round of our villages in the interval. During this period there have been accessions to our ranks in every parish. So far as I know, there has only been one defection. It is the story of that defection which I have now to tell.

Our leader was Silas Doebedoe. The etymologists affirm that this name is a corruption of one of those Scriptural appellations of which the old Puritans were proud; from which I infer that an ancestor of Silas must have been called "Do-as-thou-wouldst-be-done-by." Only in its most corrupted form was Silas worthy of his ancestral name. For sharp practice in everything within his range I have never met his match.

He was generally known as "Dobby." His employer called him a "farm-hand"; but this term understates his abilities. Prior to his arrival in our midst he had seen something of the world; had been a soldier—some said a deserter; had worked on the line as a shunter, and as a navvy in the towns. That a man with so varied an experience should have settled down to the life of a "farm-hand" was something of a mystery; but in these days, when labourers are scarce and farmers must put up with what they can get, such mysteries are not uncommon

in the country districts. I believe that Silas had a history which he was not over-anxious to make public property; he used to put us off by saying that he had a weak lung and the doctor had ordered him to live on the land. Outwardly there was nothing to distinguish him from those whose lungs were in the best of health, and as it was natural to Silas to lie whenever anything was to be gained by so doing—in which respect, I am sorry to say, he was not unlike the rest of our parishioners—there is no very strong reason for believing this part of his story.

It was Silas who prepared the ground for the advent of the young gentleman from London. Long before that stirring event he had taught us that we were slaves and accustomed us to look to “the State” for our salvation. What “the State” was we did not accurately know; but we were quite sure that it was on our side and against everybody else, and could do anything it liked. We understood that when “the State” got to work we should be at liberty to name our own wages; work for as long as we felt inclined—that is, not for very long; order our own cottages; select any piece of land which pleased us; and have beer at discretion. The State was just the sort of fellow to suit our fancy; for not only would it do us a good turn at every point, but would make things “damned hot” (to quote Dobby) for the people we disliked. The keynote

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of the Social Revolution—so we were informed by the same authority—would be “a workhouse full o’ Dooks”; our employers would be put in prison and fed with the bread and water of affliction; while the parson, who kept two motors, would be sent to mend the roads in place of old Job Severence, who was married to his fourth wife and had twenty-seven children.

It is true that we were a little muddled at times, as, for example, when Dobby told us that the wages-system would be abolished. We used to shy at that, for we liked our wages and wanted more of them; but Dobby set the matter at rest by assuring us that what the State would abolish was not the wages, but only “the system.” To that we had no objection. Whatever “system” might mean, it was nothing we cared about; so the sooner it was abolished the better. Sometimes, indeed, we grew sceptical, especially on Saturday nights, when, banging our pots down on the taproom table, we would ask one another, “I say, Bill, *what’s* this ’ere ‘State’ that’s goin’ to do everything for everybody?” Whereupon Bill would answer, “The State—why, it’s what gives us Old Age Pensions.” “Aye—and what vaccinates the kids,” says Tom. “Aye—and what schools ’em too,” says Sam. Here the landlord would chime in, “It’s the same as what the parson was talking about on Sunday—Church and State, you know.” “Get out,” somebody would

answer, "that's not the same State as vaccinates the kids." "Yes, it is." "And a bloomin' shame too." "*What's* a shame?" "Why, this 'ere vaccination." "Shut up about vaccination—who wants to speak about that? We're talkin' about the State." "You're thinkin' about State-coaches." "You mean stage-coaches." "No, I don't." "You don't know what you're talkin' about." "You're a liar!" "Order, gentlemen, order," cries the landlord; and, order being restored, Dobby takes up his parable. "Now just you listen to me and I'll tell you what the State is. The State's what gives you fourpence for threepence." "That's it! That's it!" cry the audience—and we all go home, more or less steadily, not doubting that the State is omnipotent. From which you may infer that great ideas get considerably diluted before they reach our parish; but they reach it all the same.

These great ideas, when introduced into the medium of our agricultural minds, often assume a form very different from that which their originators intend them to wear. The idea as freshly minted, say, by Karl Marx or Mr. Bernard Shaw, is one thing; as apprehended by a farm labourer it is quite another. It suffers a sea change—or rather a land change—in the process of transmission from the mountain-tops of thought to the lowly vales of manual toil.

Some of our instructors would be startled if they

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were to see their own doctrines as they are reflected in our minds. I remember, for example, how bothered we were by the conception of Universal Brotherhood. Many barrels of ale were consumed in our efforts to penetrate this mystery, and so hot did the discussion grow that serious fights were only prevented by the timely threats of the landlord to fetch the police. But we got it at last, thanks, as usual, to Dobby, who announced that he was going to put the matter "in a nutshell." "What is it," he said, "what is it that Tom Mellon and Charley Stamp allus does when they're three parts drunk? Tell me that." We all knew the answer to that question. Tom Mellon and Charley Stamp, when three parts drunk, always stripped off their coats and had a "set-to" in the village street. So we replied accordingly. "Well, then," said Dobby, "now we're gettin' to Universal Brotherhood. It means this: Tom Mellon and Charley Stamp, instead o' fighting one another when they're drunk, *will 'elp one another 'ome.*"

Every laborer in our parish is the owner of a pig. Not to possess a pig is to be without an anchorage, or point of support, in the universe. The pig is the centre of gravity of our existence. He steadies our minds, gives sanity to our aspirations, and keeps us in touch with realities. He is the ultimate standard of reference by which we test the teachings of science, philosophy, and religion. Whatsoever

reformer or prophet would win our allegiance, let him see to it that his doctrines encounter no point of resistance in the pig.

We used in old days to kill our pig and consume his *disjecta membra* in the winter months. But we are business men in everything that concerns the sty; we work out our profit and loss to the fraction of a halfpenny; and we have discovered that it is far more profitable to sell our pig to the dealer, and buy what bacon we want in the village shop. "Pigs is pigs in these times." And I can tell you we are hard bargainers, as every pig-dealer on the countryside knows to his cost. In the art of buying under the market price and selling over it, we could give points to any millionaire. To sell his pig for something more than its real value is a coveted distinction, and sheds a lustre on the man who does it which keeps us talking half the winter. To "be done" by a dealer, on the other hand, is a thing we dread far more than the pains of hell-fire, though it must be confessed that, in spite of our scepticism, the prospect of these is apt to make us nervous as we approach our latter end. Billy Grimes, for instance, confided to me on his death-bed "that he was sure the devil would get him"; but what cut him up more than all else was that his old missus, whom he was leaving behind, was "no 'and at sellin' a pig."

Imperial affairs do occasionally attract our at-

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tention; but they are a mere parenthesis in the deeper policy of the sty.

We heard the other day, for example, that there was going to be a civil war in Ulster, and that the Empire was on the point of disruption. Tom Mellon had just read all about it from the *Daily Mail*, when suddenly there arrived a breathless messenger with the news that Dobby's pig had fetched the unprecedented price of twelve shillings a score¹ at the weekly cattle sale. Whereupon the Imperial Crisis vanished from our minds; so far as we were concerned the British Empire ceased to exist, and a debate arose which for length, oratorical affluence, power to draw fine distinctions, and general inconclusiveness, would bear comparison with the highest efforts of the House of Commons. The dispute was as to whether we were justified in selling at eleven shillings a score instead of holding out for twelve. The highest authorities were cited, including the auctioneer; and the opinion of this great expert being in favour of the lower rate, we were on the point of concluding in that sense, when Silas Doebedoe arrived on the scene and completely upset the course of the argument. Contrary to our expectation, we found that the excellent bargain just made had brought no contentment to the soul of Dobby. "Twelve shillings a score!" he said contemptuously. "What's twelve shillings a score? You just wait till

¹ This was before the war.

the State begins to buy yer pigs, and then you'll get any price you like to ask."

Dobby was far and away the best "pig-man" among the lot of us, which is saying a good deal. We used to say, "Dob has a knack wi' 'em." "Knack" is our word for "genius." "Dob's the boy for making 'em swell," was another way of expressing the same thing. I have known him to buy a measly pig, which the owner was going to knock on the head, for a half-a-crown and nurse it by the application of "knack" till it half filled the sty and was worth ten pounds. He was always on the look-out for these derelicts, and never failed to rehabilitate them into marketable animals; and I can tell you there was some talk in our village when Dobby appeared one day at the auction of a small holding and made a bid at two hundred pounds.

He would spend long hours—literally hours, some of which, I fear, were due to his employer—leaning over the wall of his sty and gazing at the animal that wallowed below. These were the happiest hours of his life. What was he thinking about? Strictly speaking, I doubt if he was thinking at all. He was in that attitude of mind which M. Bergson recommends as the only proper attitude for the metaphysician: the condition, namely, when thought gives place to intuition and the mind becomes completely identified with its object. Had Dobby

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gazed at the universe with the same intensity and self-detachment he would have been a great mystic. Had he been a Japanese artist he would have drawn us pigs so true to the life that we should have heard them grunt. But, as it was, the result of all these communings with porcine reality were merely to produce in Dobby that wonderful "knack" which "made 'em swell."

It is a notable fact, which I often observed, that during these mystic hours the pig used to gaze at Dobby almost as intently as Dobby gazed at the pig; they would grunt to each other at intervals; there was the same expression on both their faces, and I am strongly of opinion that the attitude of the animal to the man was as strictly Bergsonian as that of the man to the animal. Intuition was at work on both sides; action and reaction were equally powerful; the "knack" was reciprocal, and the pig is no more to be considered as the creation of Dobby than Dobby as the creation of the pig.

Now it so happened that Mr. Archibald Hermes, M.A., of Oxford—the young gentleman "from London" who has done so much to promote the noble discontent of our Parliamentary Division—had never studied these things. He had the *Republic* of Plato at his finger-ends; he was an expert in Political Economy; he was master of the Philosophy of the State, and could discourse by the hour on the rela-

tions of the individual to the Social Whole. But he knew nothing about pigs. Needless to say, he had never kept a pig himself, and was naturally a stranger to the emotions, desires, aspirations, and the peculiar mental atmosphere which arise from that species of proprietorship. The relation of man and man in the social structure was a subject he had been studying for years, but to the relation of men and pigs he had never given a thought. He had not even reflected (as the sequel will show) that the animals, thanks to those procreative instincts which the Creator has implanted in their nature, have much to do with the existence of an "unearned increment" in the affairs of men.

Mr. Hermes' strongest point was the land question; he knew the statistics of the subject by heart: he had made a catalogue of every abuse, injustice, and anomaly for which the private ownership of land can be made responsible, and could marshal them in his speeches with overwhelming effect; he was prepared to answer any question about the land at a moment's notice, and the most hostile audience could not heckle him out of countenance. For these reasons he had been selected by the Organization which ran him as the right man for propaganda among the agricultural laborers.

None the less, I think it was a mistake to send him down to our parish without a word of warning. For here, as I have said, the pig and not the land

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is the ultimate category of our thought; we cannot think of Utopia or Heaven without a smell of frying bacon in our nostrils, nor listen contentedly to any Gospel which is incompatible with pork-pie. It is true that some of us are Socialists already; but our minds move slowly, and we take a long time in bringing new ideas to the ultimate point of reference. At the time of which I am writing we were ripe for that reference; we were just beginning to make it, as was shown by the applause we gave Dobby when he declared that the State would buy the pigs—not the land—at our own price. Had the Society sent down a propagandist who was a good pig-man as well as an accomplished social philosopher, he could have converted the whole parish at a stroke.

It was the eve of a by-election, and we were all gathered on the village green. In the midst stood the van which contained Mr. Hermes' bed, cooking stove, and munitions of war. The sides of the van were covered with various texts inviting the rural mind to rise against oppression, which we read, or had read to us, with much satisfaction while we were waiting for Mr. Hermes. He meanwhile was smoking a cigarette inside the van and just finishing the last act of a play by Mr. Shaw—for Mr. Hermes is so ready with appropriate eloquence that he does not require even a moment's preparation before addressing the meeting.

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At last the orator came forth, accompanied by the chairman, a young minister from the next town. Standing on a platform at the end of the van, he uttered these words in a loud, ringing voice:

"How long are you men going to let yourselves be treated as slaves? Does any man here think he's not a slave? Then in five minutes I'll prove to him that he is."

This promise Mr. Hermes fulfilled in even less time than he had indicated. "What is a slave?" he asked. "A slave is a man whom his master uses as a chattel." ("Did he say a 'chapel'?" whispered Tom Mellon.) "Is there a laborer in this parish whom his master *doesn't* use as chattel?" ("No!") "Then what were we? Why, slaves, of course."

The main principle thus established, Mr. Hermes proceeded for the space of forty minutes to follow it into the details of its application. Then, drawing the threads of his argument together, he showed us that one remedy, and one remedy only, could be found for our woes—the abolition of private property and the State-ownership of all the means of production, especially the land. This led up to the peroration; and here it was that Mr. Hermes fell by chance upon a metaphor which, as ill luck would have it, revealed the weak spot in his armour. Until private property was abolished, so he assured us, we agricultural laborers would be doomed to

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live like "*pigs in a sty.*" This was the last sentence.

Now, the idea of living like a pig in a sty is not so disgusting to the mind of our parish as it would be to the mind of a town-bred, pig-despising audience. With us the pig is honored, and his sty has a sanctity of its own. Sometimes, as in the case of Silas Doebedoe, the sty is almost a substitute for a shrine or a church. Hence it was that Mr. Hermes' concluding sentence was something worse than a weak ending. It implied disparagement of the pig. It was disrespectful to the local deity. It jarred with emotions which lie in the depths of our agricultural breasts, and came perilously near a personal insult. Had Mr. Archibald Hermes possessed a finer skill in his calling of paid agitator he would have known how to make our pig-emotions serve his purpose and would have turned them into productive capital. He would have shown us that the present Social System was inimical to the true interest of pigs and unjust to the lover of bacon. He could have done it quite easily. But instead of this he spoke of our idol with a note of scorn, and roused the whole current of our pig-consciousness into opposition. He prodded into us, as it were, at the most sensitive point of our epidermis; and in an instant we became as angry and foul-mouthed as we are wont to be when a calf on Sunday morning upsets the feeding-

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pail over our best trousers, or when one of Farmer Perryman's big rams suddenly butts into us from the rear. Up to that moment our blood had been boiling against the Social System. Now, for some reason we could not quite explain to ourselves, it suddenly cooled towards the Social System and began to boil at Mr. Hermes; and Dobby, who was standing next to me, said in a contemptuous whisper:

"What does 'e know about pigs?"

Mr. Hermes then declared that he was ready to answer questions, and the words were hardly out of his mouth when somebody on the outskirts of the crowd called out in truculent tones:

"What about the poor man's pig?"

Mr. Hermes was not prepared for this question. He had thought a great deal about "capital," but not in the form of the poor man's pig. The word "capital" suggested to his mind a big factory, a railway company, or a line of steamships; it had never suggested a fat sow. So he was visibly disconcerted, perhaps as much by the fierce tone of the question itself, and he blurted out an answer which I am bound to say was unworthy of an Oxford man.

"The poor man's pig?" he said. "Well, what about it?"

"Tell us what Socialism is going to do wi' un," replied the voice.

Mr. Hermes did not know what to say. But he

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had to say something, and to make it as consistent as possible with what he had said already. So after a moment's thought, which might have been better bestowed, the oracle replied as follows:

"The State will buy the poor man's pig at a fair price."

"How much a *score*?" we all shouted at once. It must be remembered that we had just made up our minds to take not less than eleven shillings at the local sale.

"A score of *what*?" said Mr. Hermes with a bewildered look on his intellectual brow.

A roar of laughter greeted this reply, and we observed that an agitated conference was proceeding between Mr. Hermes and the chairman. Presently the former again faced the audience and said:

"The State will pay so much for each individual pig. It will not buy them a *score at a time*."

At this reply our laughter became a tornado and we fairly lost control of ourselves. For five full minutes we roared and hallooed, poking one another in the ribs, thumping one another on the back, and saying to our chosen friends as we gasped for breath, "Eh, Tommy, that beats all; that licks me 'oller; that's the best 'un as I've 'eard for many a long year. I'd give eighteenpence to 'ear another as good as that."

Meanwhile the conference had been resumed

between Hermes and the chairman; to judge by the gestures of the two men, it had become an altercation. Even we began to perceive that two different brands of Socialism were represented on the platform. At last, the din having subsided, Hermes, making a great effort to be calm, resumed:

"The chairman reminds me, gentlemen, that the point we are discussing has not yet been settled by the leaders of the movement. Of course, under Socialism, we must be prepared for a certain amount of give and take. Pigs are unquestionably a form of private property, and the owner of a pig is a capitalist. It may be—though, as I say, the point is not yet decided—that the State will take the pigs over and rear them for the good of the community. But the owner of the pig will get back far more than its value in the general advantage of his position."

At this the chairman said "Hear, hear" in a loud voice, but the rest of us roared out "Rot!"—and other things. Slow as we are, we were quick enough to perceive that the orator's second answer was inconsistent with the first, which gave us the comfortable feeling that we had him in a hole.

There is a dormant capitalist in the breast of every man. Mr. Archibald Hermes, whose knowledge of human nature lagged behind his other attainments, was not aware of this. A few minutes earlier he had had us in the hollow of his hand,

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helpless in the grip of his superior knowledge, overpowered by the affluence of his speech, and prepared to strike a telling blow for the social revolution by voting next day for the Socialist candidate. In an instant he found the whole situation reversed. Instead of hissing the social system, we were hissing Mr. Hermes. Instead of our being in his power, he was in ours. We had him down; our heels were on his neck, and we were exulting in his humiliation.

He was conscious that he had now become the bottom dog, but what had placed him in that position he hadn't the ghost of an idea. Nor had the chairman, who, in his efforts to retrieve the day, had been giving Mr. Hermes the worst possible advice. The two were quarrelling in consequence, Mr. Hermes having twice told the Chair in our hearing to "shut up." The heat thence arising effectually prevented both of them from perceiving the root of the mischief—which was, of course, that they had roused the dormant capitalist in the breast of the agricultural laborer by reminding him of his pig. Now the capitalist is an ugly customer in whatever form you encounter him, but never uglier than when he takes this shape. So matters went on from bad to worse, and a sinister cry of "Put him in the pond!" had already broken out when the chairman saw fit to intervene.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I appeal to you to give

the speaker a fair hearing. Our friend over yonder has raised a very difficult question, and perhaps I may be allowed to add a short explanation to what Mr. Hermes has said. The State will not interfere with the property of the poor, but only with the property of the rich. The poor man will be left in full possession of his pig. State piggeries will be established, as Mr. Hermes has told you, and every poor man will be allowed to claim a free pig as his birthright. When the pig is ready for market the State will buy it back at a price to be fixed by law; that is, unless the poor man prefers to consume it in his own family. The difference will be that all buying and selling between individuals will be done away with. The State will be the only purchaser. Then you will be sure of a fair price for your pig and escape from the clutches of the dealers, *who invariably cheat you.*"

He would have said more, but the last four words were fatal. Had the chairman set himself to devise the deadliest insult to our parish, he could have hit upon nothing better suited to his purpose than those four words. Cheated by pig-dealers! At the bare notion the soul of Dobby flamed into wrath and the whole crowd caught fire. There was a long, fierce howl of indignation, followed by an instant of terrible silence, in which we gazed into one another's faces as though seeking an execration strong enough to meet the case.

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That instant was the salvation of the platform. A single word suddenly arrested the rising storm. It was the word "litters." At first "litters" was all we could hear; but presently we became aware that the same voice which had raised the original difficulty was asking a question. And the question was:

"What about the litters?"

There is a spell in the word "litters" to which the mind of the agricultural laborer is singularly susceptible. It reminds us of great mysteries and exciting moments. It puts us on ground which is our own, ground where we can walk with the assurance of archdruids and the dignity of high priests. With one voice we took up the question of the speaker, and in tones befitting a solemn incantation we repeated his words:

"What about the litters?"

Then we waited for a reply.

For a moment the countenance of Mr. Hermes grew brighter. He saw, or thought he saw, an opening that promised escape.

"I am glad my friend has raised that question," he said. "The litters are a striking illustration of what I have been explaining in the course of my speech. They represent unearned increment. Under Socialism they will be taxed to their full value. That is to say, the poor man will either surrender the litter to the State as soon as it is born"

(here the chairman vainly tugged at Mr. Hermes' coat tails), "or he will pay a tax equal to the value of the pigs, less a small allowance for the expenses of—of the sow's confinement. A moment's consideration will show you the justice of this arrangement. It is true you will lose your own litter; but then you will get back in other forms a share in all the litters which the State has taken from other people."

Again there was silence. It was complicated and we were trying to think it out. We were to give up our litters and get back a share from the litters of other people. *What* share? Would it be living or dead? Would it come back in pigs or in pork, or in both, or in something else? If pork, would it be fat or lean? Should we be allowed to choose? If pigs, would the same thing happen over again when the next litter arrived? Not more than ten seconds were required for all these questions, and several others of the same kind, to pass through our minds. We could answer none of them.

You see, our minds are not constructed on the same pattern as the minds of young gentlemen from Oxford. The young gentlemen grasp the principle first and leave the details to be settled afterwards. We begin with the details, and work up, through them, to the principles. It is therefore futile for the young gentlemen to assure us that "we shall get a share" unless they can also tell us whether the share

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is to be in living pig or dead pork—or something else. We want to know that from the very outset. Things which make no difference to the young gentlemen make a great difference to us. For example, a Socialism which rewarded our services in terms of bacon would leave many of us cold or hostile; but a Socialism which sent round a small pig to every deserving laborer, especially if the Government would guarantee that the pig should have a curly tail—a feature to which our parish attaches great importance,—would win our votes to a man.

Ten seconds only, I say, were occupied in these cogitations, and then came this very question, voiced as it happened by a young fellow who was assistant teacher in the village school and was known to have leanings to vegetarianism:

“Will the share be *living* or *dead*?”

A whisper from the chairman informed Mr. Hermes of the point of the questioner. Mr. Hermes grasped it immediately.

“You must understand,” he said, “that I am now dealing with the beginnings of the new system—with the time when the change to Socialism is taking place. It is only at the beginning that the State will appropriate the litters. Later on private ownership of pigs will be done away with” (here the chairman shook his head); “consequently there will be no litters for the State to appropriate. When Socialism is fully established there will be State piggeries and

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State bacon factories, where enough bacon will be cured for everybody to have as much as he wants."

We were staggered by this announcement. We were to have our share, not in live pig, but in dead bacon. Never! The whole world might go to rack and ruin before we would submit to such an arrangement so sacrilegious. Our anger could no longer be restrained. Nobody heeded the young school teacher, who kept calling out amid the tumult of howls and curses, "What will the State do with the pigs when everybody has turned vegetarian?" There was a scene of indescribable confusion. Stones began to rain on the van and a dozen stout fellows were trying to overturn it. Silas Doebedoe and Mr. Hermes, who had now dropped from the platform, were shaking their fists in one another's faces. A fierce argument had broken out between the vegetarian and the chairman, who were shrieking out something about a "free potato-patch." In a few moments somebody would have been seriously hurt.

Then suddenly the State itself appeared among us like a bolt from the blue. Behold, the village sergeant followed by his constable! Parting the throng as with a wedge, the sergeant made his way to the van. Arrived there he lifted his cane on high, struck it on the side of the van and said to Mr. Hermes, "Pack up!" That said, he turned to the crowd, now silent, and issued this command: "Go home, every man jack of yer!"

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Both commands were instantly obeyed. I have only to add that next day we all rode in the costly motors of the local gentry to the polling-booth, where, to a man, we voted for the Tory candidate. We had received instructions to that effect from Dobby. And from that day our parish has looked upon Socialism as "a dodge" of which the sinister object is "*to do the poor man out of his pig.*"

VI

FARMER JEREMY AND HIS WAYS

MR. JEREMY'S system for the regulation of human life was summed up in the maxim, "Put your back into it"; and a lifetime of practising what he preached has endowed that part, or aspect, of his person with an astonishing vitality and developed it to an enormous size. Not without reason did our yeomanry sergeant exhibit his stock joke by informing Jeremy on parade that if only his head had been set the other way he would have had the finest chest in the British army.

But the full significance of Jeremy's back was not to be perceived by one who looked upon it from the drill-sergeant's point of view. It was not only the broadest but the most expressive organ of the farmer's body, and a poet's eye was needed to interpret the meaning it conveyed. For myself, I should never have suspected that it meant anything more than great physical strength employed in a strenuous life, had not a poetical friend of mine

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taken the matter up and enlightened me. My friend and I were crossing a field by the footpath, and Jeremy, walking rapidly in the same direction, was a few yards ahead.

"There goes a man," I whispered, "who is worth your study. You could write a poem about him. He's one of the few remaining specimens of a type that is becoming extinct. He represents agriculture as it was before the advent of science and Radical legislation. He is the most honest and prosperous farmer in the county: a man, moreover, who has endured many sorrows and conquered them. Let us overtake him, for I should like you to see him face to face."

"Not so," said my friend. "The man's history, as you have told it, and much more beside, is written on his back. Let us remain, therefore, as we are, and study him where such men best be studied, from the rear. His back, I perceive, especially the upper portion of it, is the principal organ of his intelligence. Observe, he is thinking with his back even now—he hitched his trousers up a moment ago. His thoughts are pleasant—you can see it in the rhythmical movement of the muscles under his coat. He has some great design on hand and is sure he can carry it through—see how his shoulders, as he swings along, seem to be tumbling forward over his chest. He has had great sorrows—the droop in the cervical vertebræ confirms it;

he has conquered them—hence that forward plunge into his task. He understands his business; of course; for the back is the organ by which all business is understood. He is honest; he is temperate; he has never broken the seventh commandment. You can read his innocence in the back of his head—I wish mine were like his.” And my poetical friend turned round and showed me his villainous cerebellum.

Thus enlightened, I began a closer study of the farmer’s habits. I saw a new significance in an odd trick he had of suddenly swinging round on his heels at the interesting point of a conversation and delivering his remarks, and sometimes shaking his fist, with his back to the interlocutor. I say his back, but functionally considered it was not so; since at those moments the functions of the two sides of his body were interchanged, the organ of expression being the side now towards you, with every smile and frown accurately registered in the creases of the coat as they followed the movements of the muscles beneath. So, too, when Jeremy laughed. No doubt his face, while laughing, was expressive enough, but you couldn’t see it, because it was turned the other way. What you did see was the farmer’s coat, *a tergo*, twitching up and down as though pulled by a cord and then suddenly released like a Venetian blind; and this was quite

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enough to ensure your hearty participation in the merriment.

I also managed to take several interesting photographs from the rear; and (may the saints forgive him!) a young gentleman of my acquaintance once attempted to snapshot the hinder parts of Jeremy while in church. Unfortunately the light was bad, and the negative proved a failure. Otherwise my poetical friend, for whom I intended the photograph, would certainly have found in it material for a new poem. Be it recorded that Jeremy when engaged in devotion did not kneel, but stretched his body forward from the seat to the bookrest, presenting his back to the heavens and his face to the inner regions of the earth; and, as his body was very long and the pew very wide, the back formed a solid and substantial bridge over which you might have trundled a wheelbarrow laden with turnips. No photograph, indeed, save one of the cinematograph order, the apparatus for which was too large to lie concealed beneath the young gentleman's waistcoat, would have reproduced the creepings, ripplings, and dimplings of the farmer's coat. These gave animation to the picture; but even without them, the mere contour of the mass, thrust upwards like the back of a diving whale, was a spectacle of vigor and concentrated purpose of which my poetical friend would not have lost the significance.

Jeremy was the oldest of the Duke's tenantry, and

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the land he farmed, which was of high quality throughout, had been held by his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and by ancestors of yet remoter date. If there is any calling in which heredity is of importance to success it is surely the farmer's, and Jeremy was fully conscious that he "had it in the blood," and recognized the debt he owed to his fathers before him.

People are wont to criticize the old-fashioned farmer as a stiff and unadaptable person; but what struck me about Jeremy, who was old-fashioned enough, was the adaptiveness and flexibility of his mind in dealing with the ever-varying conditions the farmer has to face. He had an extraordinary instinct for doing the right thing at the right time, and handled his land as though it were a living thing, with a kind of unconscious tact which seemed to me the exact opposite to that blind and mechanical following of habit which so often, but so mistakenly, is said to be the standing fault of his class. Obstinate and incredulous as he seemed to the new teachings of veterinary or agricultural science, I yet noticed that Jeremy managed to absorb enough of these things to produce the results he desired; and though he never absorbed as much of them as the experts required, his crops were always larger and his stock healthier than those of his neighbors whose farming was strictly according to the modern card.

I have read one or two books on the nature of

soils, and it is not without significance to me that the little, the very little, useful knowledge I have of these things was derived not from the books but from Mr. Jeremy. There was a bit of ground in my garden where I could make nothing grow, and I hunted in vain through all the gardening books I could find for a remedy, and even went the length of consulting some of the gifted authors, two of whom were ladies. I sent them specimens of the soil for examination; they teased them with formulæ and tormented them with acids; they boiled them in retorts and pickled them in glass tubes; they sent me the names of marauding bacteria whose lodgings they had discovered in that morsel of earth: and I, following their instructions, dosed the land with atrocious chemicals, until the earthworms sickened and the very snails forsook the tainted spot. Still nothing would grow.

Then came Mr. Jeremy. He picked up a handful of the soil; gazed at it as a lapidary gazes at diamonds; smelt it; felt it tenderly with his forefinger; spat upon it; rubbed the mixture on his breeches; inspected the result, first on his breeches and then on his hand—and now my barren patch is blossoming like the garden of the Lord. The others had advised me to try I know not what—nitrates of this and phosphates of that, sulphates of the other and carbonates of something else. Mr. Jeremy said,

"Chuck a cart-load o' fine sand on her and then rip her up."

Mr. Jeremy, I have said, was aware that his roots struck deeply into the past, and this consciousness, I believe, helped to give him that confidence in himself without which no man can successfully till the earth or battle with destiny—the two things, I believe, being at bottom much the same.

His farmhouse, so far as I could judge, was built—and built of almost imperishable stone—in the later years of the reign of Charles II., and had never been structurally modified since its erection. Some of the out-buildings were of yet earlier date. Scattered about in odd corners were not a few interesting relics of the past. For example, there was a case of coins, which had been arranged for Jeremy by the late Rector's wife, representing every reign from Charles I. to George IV., every one of which coins had been dug up on the farm. In the big courtyard there was a block of hard stone scored with grooves and notches, where the troopers in some forgotten battle were said to have sharpened their swords; on the outside wall was a row of rings and stables where the same troopers had tethered their horses. In the cellar there was a collection of large shot, which there was reason to think had been stored there at the time of the forgotten battle; and with these were a lot of iron buckles, and broken tobacco-pipes of ancient form, which had been dug

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up in a mound on the hillside through which Jeremy was cutting a drain. A good pint-measure of human teeth, in excellent preservation, had been discovered in the same place, and these were kept in an old tobacco-box. Connected with all this, I suppose, were the names of several of the fields on the farm: one of which was called "The Slaughters"; another, "Horses' Water"; another, "The Guns." And besides these, which reminded one of "old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago," there were two other fields, the names of which were also interesting to me. One, a beautiful meadow with a southern slope, was "Abbot's Vineyard," and the big pond with the aspens beside it was "Benedict's Pool." Of these names the explanation was utterly lost; nor could I invent a theory, for the nearest religious house of pre-Reformation times was many miles away. The other field was called "Quebec," and the coppice at its upper end was "Monckton Wood."

These latter names I am able to explain. Several of Jeremy's ancestors had been to the wars, among them was his great-great-grandfather Silas Jeremy, who had fought under Wolfe at the capture of Quebec, and probably under Monckton in some earlier campaign. In the house there were several mementoes of this man: the identical George II. shilling he had received on enlisting—proving, as Jeremy would often say, that his great-great-grand-

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father was a "sober" man; a gold watch with a beautifully executed design of the death of Wolfe engraved on the case, said to have been presented to Silas on his return from the wars by the reigning Duke; and, above all, a flintlock musket, with bayonet attached, which Jeremy asserted his ancestor had used in the battle, but which I judge on examination to have been of French manufacture, and therefore most probably a relic picked up from the battle-field—perhaps the identical musket along whose barrel some French grenadier had taken aim at the noble heart of Wolfe—who knows?

Another memorial of this ancestor—a pretty obvious one—I can myself claim to have identified. It was an obstinate rule of the farm that the annual "harvest-home" should be held on September 13; and even if the harvest was much belated and only a portion then gathered in, still September 13 was the date, provided only that it did not fall on a Sunday. September 13, I need hardly say, is the anniversary of the battle of the Heights of Abraham. The coincidence had been entirely forgotten by the Jeremys, and was unrecorded in the traditions of our village; but not many days after I had pointed it out, the gossips having been at work in the meantime, an old man came in from a neighboring parish and told me "as how" his father had talked with a man who knew another man who had been present at the Jeremy's harvest-home in 1760,

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when Silas Jeremy, who had just come back from foreign parts, and whose tomb was in the churchyard, sang a song about the taking of Quebec, which the old man's father used to sing—though he himself couldn't remember it—and declared that for all time to come the feast should be held on Quebec Day, and on no other.

This little circumstance, I may say in passing, was the beginning of my friendship with the Jeremy who forms the subject of the present story. My discovery of the coincidence gave him a most aggravated opinion of my abilities and worth. To quote his own words, it proved me to be "a gentleman as knows what's what"—a characteristic which, so far as I am aware, has never been revealed to anybody else. And Jeremy's good opinion of me was yet further enhanced when he learnt that I had twice visited the Plains of Abraham; that I knew the place by heart; that I had climbed up the goat-path by which his ancestor had scaled the heights, and had laid my head on the spot where Wolfe met his most enviable death. He would have me into his house that very night to tell him all about it; showed me the George II. shilling and the gold watch; took down the old musket and let me handle it and put it to my shoulder and even pull the trigger; spent two hours in rapt attention while I read out Parkman's account of the battle; and finally summed up the whole campaign and its significance in one

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sweeping comment, "By Gum, sir, them fellers put their backs into it, and that's *just* what they did!"

The saying held true, I should think, of Jeremy's grandfather, to judge by another relic carefully treasured in the house. This was an enormous iron crowbar, the mere lifting of which was a challenge to "put your back into it." With this weapon the Jeremy of that day had successfully defended himself against a crowd of rascals who came out to burn his ricks in 1832. Some memories of that fight were still extant in the village, and a bonny fight it must have been. My informant, an eye-witness of the scene, was ninety years of age and too nearly imbecile to stand cross-examination; but what he remembered was to the point. Aware of the impending danger, Jeremy had built his ricks that year within the defenses of his courtyard, the walls of which he had rendered unscalable by various devices. It only remained, therefore, to defend the gate; and here were posted Timothy Caine with a maul, Job Henderson with a flail, an unnamed woman with a cauldron of flour to fling in the face of the enemy, and the farmer with the crowbar. These won the day; and more I cannot tell you, because my informant's language, which I could never induce him to vary, became extremely metaphorical at this point: "Master Jeremy, he give 'em pen and ink: pen and ink is what he give 'em with the crowbar, sir, that he did; there was

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none on 'em wanted hitting twice, no, not one; and, my eye! to see the flour a-flying! What a steam it made! I can see it now."

Agricultural experts who visited our parish, though forced to admire the excellence of Jeremy's farming, were wont to criticize him for being "too slow." Now there, I think, they were distinctly wrong. I have nothing to say against Agricultural Science: I wish there was more of it; but if it has a weakness it lies in a certain tendency to be "quick" precisely at those points where Jeremy was triumphantly "slow." His slowness was simply the instinctive timing of his action to the movements of Nature, who is also "slow" in relation to yet higher powers. You would often think that he was dawdling; but if you looked into the matter you were sure to find that just then Nature was dawdling too, and that Jeremy was beating her at a waiting game. So, too, if you watched a python creeping from branch to branch or lying coiled in a glass case you would judge it to be the slowest of beasts; but not if you saw it springing on its prey. There was much of the wisdom of the serpent in Mr. Jeremy, as there must be in every man who earns his living by battle with the natural order of the world. "I wakes regularly at five o'clock," he would say. "But I never gets up till a quarter past. What do I think about in that quarter of an hour? Why, I spends it in *cutting out*." By "cutting out" he

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meant the process of mentally arranging the day's work for himself and for every man on the farm. The python on the branch, I imagine, is often engaged in "cutting out." "In farming," he added, for he was giving a lesson, "you ought to cut out fresh every day, and not every week, as some farmers do—though I've knowed them as never cut out at all. And cutting out's a thing you can never learn in books and colleges. It comes by experience—and a light hand. Sometimes you must cut out *rough*, and sometimes you must cut out *fine*—mostly according to the weather and the time o' year—and always *leave a bit somewhere as isn't cut out at all*. And when you've done the cutting out, take a look out o' the window and tap the barometer. Do it the minute you jumps out o' bed. And if there's been a change in the wind during the night, cut out *again* while you're pulling your breeches on and tear up what you've cut out already. And don't give no orders to anybody till you've had your breakfast—leastways a cup o' tea; it clears a man's head and lets you see if you've been making any mistakes. I've often cut out six or seven times between waking and giving the day's orders—what with the tricks of the weather and my head not being as clear as it ought to have been." And I wondered how often Napoleon had done likewise.

I have to confess that my acquaintance with Mr. Jeremy has not been without a certain demoralizing

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effect. It has corrupted the brightness of many comfortable truths which excellent preceptors taught me in my youth. I will not say that my hold on these truths has altogether vanished; but, thanks to Mr. Jeremy's influence, I have learned to see them in so many new lights, and with so many qualifications, that for purposes of platform oratory on all questions connected with the land and its uses I have entirely lost the very little effectiveness I once had. There was a time when if anyone mentioned the land I always wanted to make a speech. Now I feel—what no doubt I ought to have felt then—that I must hold my tongue. To be quite frank, my views on the land have become confused, hesitating, and politically ineffective. That a farmer owning his own land was *cæteris paribus* necessarily better off than a tenant once seemed to me a truth so plain as not to be worth discussion. But if I had to speak on that point now, I should hesitate and hedge about to a degree which would force any intelligent audience to regard me as a fool. Instead of speaking out loud and strong for peasant proprietorship, I should be thinking all the time of the three peasant proprietors in our neighborhood—George Corey, Charles Narroway, and Billy Hoare, who are the meanest, the stingiest, the most underhand and generally despicable rascals I have ever met. Were a resolution placed before the meeting in favor of bringing the townspeople back on to

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the land, I should say in support that while it is infinitely sad to see the real peasantry drifting into the towns, it is yet worse to see people like Prendergast, the ex-draper, drifting out of the towns and setting up as country gentlemen. I should want to tell the audience all about Prendergast and the hideous human packing-case he has built on the opposite hillside; how he swindled the village shopkeeper out of twenty pounds; how he sweats his laborers just as he sweated the poor girls who used to serve behind his counter; how he told me to go to the devil when I begged him not to build his abominable house where it would spoil the view: and then I should want to add a few details about his personal habits which I am afraid would cause the ladies to walk out of the room. And I should wind up by saying, amid the derisive laughter of the audience, that one reason, at all events, why the real peasants go *into* the towns is to escape from slavery to these pinchbeck fellows who come *out* of the towns. I should want to quote—but I am afraid my courage would have already broken down—what Jeremy once said to me:—"The Dook—when did you ever hear of any man going into the town as worked on *his* estate? But as for this 'ere Prendergast, I wonder the very pigs stop in his sty."

"It takes *two* sir," said Jeremy, "for to handle the land. A nobleman to own it, and a farmer to cultivate it. There's nothing that gives you *confi-*

dence like having a real gentleman behind you—and the Dook's a real gentleman if ever there was one. And you want confidence in farming—and that's what these 'ere Radicals don't see. I don't want none o' *their* safeguards! Give me the Dook—he's safeguard enough for me! And what safeguard have you when fellers like Prendergast begin buying up the land? Look at *his* tenants—not a real farmer among 'em, no, and not one as can make both ends meet. These little landlords are the men they ought to shoot at, not the big 'uns. Now isn't it a wonderful thing that my family and the Dook's has kept step with one another for a matter of two hundred years? Eight Dooks in that time and eight Jeremys—one Jeremy to each Dook! But who'll ever keep step with Prendergast? Who'll ever *want* to? Why, I wouldn't be seen walking down the street with him, no, not if you was to give me a thousand pounds. And if he was to offer me his best farm rent-free to-morrow, I'd tell him to go and boil himself.

“No, sir,” he continued, “it don't pay to own the land you farm; and don't you believe them as tells you it does. Leastways, it pays a sight better to farm under a good landlord. Them as can't make farming pay under a landlord, can't make it pay at all. Now look at me and then look at Charley Shott. Me and Charley started the same year, him with 400 acres of his own, and me with 380 acres

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under the Dook, rented all round at twenty-eight shillings an acre. And where are we both now after thirty years? Why, if Charley's land, and all he's made on it, and all he's put into it, were set at auction to-morrow, I could buy him up twice over! And me paying over five hundred pounds a year rent for thirty years, and him not paying a penny. How does that come about? Well, you're not a farmer, and you wouldn't understand if I told you. But I'll tell you one thing as perhaps you can understand. It *hurts* the land to break it up. And it hurts the land still more to *sell* it. Now I dare say you never heard of that before."

I confessed that I had not.

"Well, it's a fact. When you break land up it won't *keep*. It goes like rotten apples: first a bit goes rotten here and then a bit there; and the rottenness spreads and runs together. And as to *selling*, I tell you there's something in the land *as knows when you're goin' to sell it, and loses heart*. I've seen the same thing in 'osses. It takes the land longer to get used to a new master than it does a 'oss; and there's some land as never will.

"No, sir, I say again, if you want to make farming *pay*, take a farm on a big estate, one that's never been broke up and's never likely to be, one that's been in the same hands for hundreds o' years, one that's never been shaken up and messed with and slopped all over with lawyer's ink, and made

sour with lawyer's lies. Never mind if the rent's a bit stiffish. Rent never bothered *me*."

I ventured to dissent from these opinions, for I had given lectures on Political Economy, and I knew of at least four different theories of Rent all at variance with Jeremy's—and with one another. Perhaps I should have succeeded better had I known of only one. But, knowing of four, I may have become a little confused in my attempts to confute Farmer Jeremy. Not that this made very much difference. On all questions relating to the nature of land and its uses Jeremy was a mystic, and orthodox Political Economy was as futile to his mind as it was to Mr. Ruskin's. Every position I took up was immediately stormed by the rejoinder, "Ah, well, you're not a farmer, and you don't understand." I could not help remembering that I had often been overthrown in more abstruse arguments by the same sort of answer. I might, indeed, have countered by saying, "Ah, well, Mr. Jeremy, you're not an economist, and *you* don't understand." But it occurred to me that the reply would be feeble.

"I tell you," he went on, "that good land *likes* to be high-rented. It sort o' keeps it in humor. Land *likes* to be owned by a gentleman, and keeps its heart up accordin'. Whenever the rent o' land goes down, the quality goes down too. I've noticed it again and again."

I tried to indicate that this last statement was

an inversion of cause and effect, but the argument made not the faintest impression on Mr. Jeremy, who merely brushed away a fly that had settled on his nose, and continued:

"I never spoke to the Dook but once. I met him one morning riding to hounds with Lady Sybil and Lady Agatha. As soon as he sees me he trots his horse up to where I was standing and holds out his hand. 'Jeremy,' says he, 'I want to shake hands with you. You're a splendid specimen of the British farmer.' 'Thank you, your Grace,' I says; 'and you're a splendid specimen of the British Dook,' for I was never afraid of speaking my mind to anyone. At that his Grace bursts out laughin', and so did Lady Sybil and Lady Agatha too. 'Let me introduce you to my two daughters,' says he. So he introduces me, and I can tell you I stood up to 'em like a man, though I did keep my hat in my hand all the time. 'Well, Jeremy,' says he, 'you've got your farm in tip-top condition'; and then he begins talking about putting up some new buildings, as me and the agent had been talking over before. 'We'll put 'em up next spring,' says his Grace; 'and remember, Jeremy, that in all that concerns the development of this farm you have me behind you.' 'I've never forgotten it, your Grace,' I says, 'and I never shall. And I'm not the only one who remembers it. *The land* remembers it too, your Grace,' I says. 'I hope it does, Jeremy,' says he, 'for I love

it.' And I never see a young lady look prettier than Lady Agatha did when she heard her father say them words."

I had heard this story so often from Farmer Jeremy, and always with the same reference to Lady Agatha at the end, that I was familiar with every word of it. He was growing old, and I believe that in the course of the year he managed to tell the story a hundred times over. "I was coming home from market last Saturday," said he, "and a lot of other farmers was in the same compartment with me. We begins talkin' about the Dook, and I happened to tell 'em about that time when I met his Grace with Lady Sybil and Lady Agatha. There was a chap sitting in one corner as didn't belong to our lot, and as soon as he hears the Dook's name mentioned he drops his paper and begins listening. Well, I never see such a rage anywhere as that man got into when I told 'em how I kept my hat in my hand while talking to the ladies. Regular insultin' is what he was; and I can tell you I never came nearer giving a man one in the eye than I did him. I believe I'd ha' done it if there'd been room in the carriage for him to put up his hands and make a square fight on it. I don't say as he weren't a plucky chap too; for there wasn't a man in the carriage as couldn't ha' knocked his head off with the flat of his hand, if he'd had a mind to. 'Look here, you fellows,' he says, 'you're a lot of blasted idiots,

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that's what you are. It's because of the besotted ignorance of men like you that England has the worst land-system in the world. Slaverin' and grov-ellin' before a lot o' rotten Dooks—why, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! I'll bet that Dook o' yours and his two painted gals was mounted on fine horses and dressed up to the nines.' 'Of course they was,' I says, 'and so they ought to be.' 'Well,' says he, 'who paid for the horses and the clothes—and the paint?' 'Here,' I says, jumping up from my seat, 'you drop the paint, or I'll pitch you out o' that winder.' 'Well, then,' says he, 'who paid for the horses and the clothes?' 'I neither know nor care,' says I; 'so long as they was paid for, it's no business of mine or yourn who paid for 'em.' '*You paid for 'em*, you fool,' says he. 'Oh, indeed,' says I. 'And now, young man, perhaps you'll allow me to give you a word of advice.' 'Fire away,' says he. 'Well,' I says, 'the next time your missus has a washin' day, you just wait till she's made the copper 'ot, and then jump into it and boil yourself!'"

The "chap" in the railway carriage was by no means the only person to whom Mr. Jeremy addressed this drastic advice. It was his usual mode of clinching an argument when his instincts supported a conclusion to which his intelligence could not find the way. This method of arriving at truth was especially useful in regard to politics and theology, in both of which Mr. Jeremy took a lively,

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or even violent, interest. Needless to say, his political aversions were of the strongest, and Mr. Lloyd George was the statesman who had to bear the hottest flame of Jeremy's wrath. More than once I have seen him fling his weekly paper on the floor with the words, "I wish this 'ere Lloyd George would jump into the copper and boil hisself"; and on my remarking that I thought this a rather inhuman suggestion, he would wave his arm round the room, in a manner to indicate the entire Liberty Party, and say, "I wish the whole lot of 'em would jump into coppers and boil themselves." As to theology, I seldom dared to address a hint of my heresies to Mr. Jeremy. But on my once saying to another person, in his presence, something to the effect that I did not believe in eternal damnation, he quickly crossed over to where I was sitting, and, giving me a rather ugly dig with his powerful forefinger, said, "Look here! You just jump into the copper and boil yourself." A wise stupidity was the keynote of Mr. Jeremy's life.

Another expression reserved for occasions when great emphasis was needed, was "a finished specimen." A thing, in Mr. Jeremy's eyes, deserved this title when its general condition was so bad that nothing worse of its kind could be conceived, and the expression accordingly was only used after the ordinary resources of descriptive language had given out. It was applied to persons as well as to things.

Mr. Lloyd George was, naturally, "a finished specimen": so was the German Emperor: so was Dr. Crippen: so was a lady of uncertain reputation who "had taken a cottage" in the neighborhood. A wet harvest, a badly built hayrick, a measly pig, a feeble sermon by the curate, were all "finished specimens." Once when the curate, getting graveled for lack of matter at the end of five minutes—for he was preaching *ex tempore*—abruptly concluded his sermon by promising to complete the subject next week, I heard Jeremy whisper to his wife, "Well, *he's* a finished specimen, that he is." Nothing irritated the good man so much as an unfinished job, and the fact that a thing was unfinished was precisely what he meant to express when he called it "a finished specimen." A great deal of human language, especially philosophical language, seems to be constructed on the same principle.

Mr. Jeremy was a regular church-goer. The Church in his eyes was part of the established order of Nature, on due observance of which the farmer's welfare depends, and merely extended into the next world those desirable results which sound instincts, punctuality, and "putting your back into it" produced in this. On week-days Mr. Jeremy farmed the broad acres of the "Dook"; on Sundays he farmed Palestine, and occasionally drove a straight furrow clean across the back of the Universe. To both operations he applied the same methods, the

same instincts, the same ideas. I confess that I have often smiled with the air of a superior person when listening to a highly trained Cathedral choir proclaiming to the strains of great music that "Moab was their washpot"; but when Mr. Jeremy repeated the words in the village church I felt that he spoke the truth, and I went away with a clearer conception of Moab than I have ever gained from the works of Kuemen or Cheyne. "Moab," I reflected, "can be no other than the little field on the hillside, where Jeremy washes his sheep in the pool behind the willows." Again, I was morally certain that if Jeremy had lived in the neighborhood of Edom he would have "cast out his shoe" upon that country, accurately aiming the missile at the head of any rascally Edomite who happened to be prowling about with a rabbit-snare in his pocket. So too when he shouted "Manasseh is mine"—he always shouted the Psalms—I was sure that Manasseh really was his, in a tenant-farmer way of speaking, and that next Thursday he would begin to rip up Manasseh with his great steam plow, and reap in due course a crop of forty bushels to the acre, paying the "Dook" a high rent for the privilege. Nor was Jeremy making any idle boast when he thundered out his further intentions, which were "to divide Sichem," "to mete out the valley of Succoth," and "to triumph" over Philistia. To be sure, Mr. Jeremy, although he would have gladly boiled the

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whole Liberal Party in coppers, was much too tender-hearted to wish that anybody's little ones should be dashed against the stones; but I believe that in his innermost thought he launched the words against "them tarnation sparrers" and "that plague o' rats." On the whole, no one who listened to Mr. Jeremy's repetition of these Psalms could doubt their entire appropriateness as a religious exercise for men such as he, or refrain from hoping that they would never be expunged from the Book of Common Prayer until the last British farmer had gone to church for the last time.

Jeremy, for a farmer, was the most outrageous optimist I have ever met. He never grumbled, save at politicians, and the worst weather could hardly disconcert him. "You can always turn a bit o' bad weather to good account—if you put your back into it. Yes, it's been a *wet* season, no doubt, but not what I should call a *bad* season. It's true we've made but little hay, and that not good; but the meadows isn't dried up as they was last year, and there'll be feed for the stock in the open most of the winter. I bought fifty new head o' stock last Wednesday—bought 'em cheap of a man as got frightened—and they'll be well fatted by Christmas." Serious setbacks, of course, often occurred; but Jeremy, unlike most of his kind, was not the man to talk about them. "What I believe in," he said, "is not only keeping your own heart up, but

helping your neighbors to keep up theirs. I've no patience with all this 'ere grumbling and growling. Of course, a person has a lot to put up with in farming; but it doesn't do a person no good to be always thinking about that. Pleasant thoughts goes a long way in making money. And I tell you there's money to be made in farming, let folks say what they will. What farmers want is not for Parliament to help 'em, but for Parliament to leave 'em alone. That's why I can't stand this 'ere Liberal Government. Why can't they stop messing wi' things—messing wi' the land, messing wi' the landlords, messing wi' the tenants, messing wi' the farm-laborers? Why can't they leave it all alone and stick to what they understand, if there's anything they *do* understand, which I doubt? No, sir; I don't want their laws, good or bad. Give me the custom of the county, and a good bench o' magistrates, and a cheerful disposition, and a farmyard full o' muck, and I've got all I want to make farming *pay*—always provided you put your back into it."

But during the long-continued rain of last summer I could not help observing that Jeremy, in spite of his fidelity to these principles, was making an effort to keep up his heart. Not only was his hay ruined, but the finest crop of wheat he had ever raised was sprouting in the ear. There was sickness among the sheep and the pigs; and the standing crop in his great orchard was sold to a middleman for a

quarter the usual price. But Jeremy made no complaint. Only, meeting the clergyman one day in the road, he said, "Parson, it's high time you put up the prayer for fine weather." Jeremy had a firm belief in the power of prayer—and especially of this one.

On the first occasion when this prayer was used in the village church I was present in my usual place behind Jeremy. As the prayer proceeded it was evident that the farmer was putting his back into it. I could see the movement of the deltoid muscles, and I watched a great crease form itself in the lower portion of his coat and gradually creep upwards until it formed a straight line from one shoulder-blade to the other. When the prayer concluded Jeremy said "Amen *and* Amen!" with the utmost fervor; and the crease in his coat slowly disappeared. I am afraid I was more occupied in watching this crease than in recalling the lesson that was taught to us sinners when it pleased Jehovah to "drown all the world, except eight persons."

During the next ten days the rain fell with increasing volume and fury: the ditches were in flood; the roads were watercourses, and much damage was done on Jeremy's farm. Meeting him at this time, I said in the course of conversation, perhaps foolishly, "Mr. Jeremy, the prayer for fine weather seems to have done us very little good." For a moment he looked at me rather angrily, as

though suspecting that some lukewarmness on my part had deprived the prayer of its due effect. Then he checked himself and seemed to reflect. "No," he said at length, "it's done us no good at all. But what else can you expect, *with all them gigglin' wenches at the back of the church?*"

It must have been some four or five days before the change came in the weather that I took advantage of a bright interval in the evening to walk across the summit of the hill which shades my house from the setting sun. I pushed on into the upland until the dusk had fallen, and found myself at last in a deserted quarry.

I lingered in the quarry pondering my memories until the great rain-clouds, creeping up from different points of the horizon, had met in the zenith and every star had disappeared. A sullen rain began to fall, and black darkness was over the hill.

I turned homewards, reflecting that it might not be easy to find my way by the sheep-tracks on so dark a night. I remembered that on the summit of the hill, some two miles from where I was, there stood an isolated barn surrounded by sheds for the shelter of cattle. From this point the way down into the village could hardly be missed, and thither accordingly I turned my steps. With some difficulty I found the barn; for the ways were wet and in some

places impassable, and the night, as I have said, was very dark.

On nearing the barn I was astonished to notice a gleam of light issuing from the half-closed door. I approached, and as I did so I was yet more astonished, and a little scared, to hear the loud and lamentable tones of a human voice. I listened, and at once recognized the voice as Jeremy's, though I could not hear what he was saying nor explain to myself the preternatural solemnity of the tone. It was not a cry of pain, nor that of a man in need of human help. I drew yet nearer, and it became plain to me that Jeremy was praying.

Curiosity tempting me on, I crept up to the barn and looked in through the partly opened door. This is what I saw. Kneeling on the floor towards the further side of the barn, with a lighted stable-lantern suspended over his head, was Jeremy. His back was towards me, but I could see that he had a book in his hand. A glance was sufficient to show me that I was looking at a man in wrestle with his God. I knew the signs of Jeremy's earnestness; and they were there—intense, unmistakable. Never have I witnessed a more solemn spectacle and, had not something held me spell-bound to the spot, I should have retreated in very shame of my intrusion.

At the moment when I first caught sight of his figure Jeremy was silent. His head was bowed on his chest, his feet were drawn close together, and

his right hand, holding the book—which I saw was the Book of Common Prayer—drooped on the ground. I noted the head of a steel rat-trap protruding from the big side-pocket of his coat. I also remember how the bright nails of his boots, of which the soles were turned towards me, glittered in the light of the lantern.

Presently Jeremy raised the book, turned over the leaves—for he had lost the place—slightly readjusted his position, and in a deep and solemn voice again began to pray. And this was his prayer:

“O Almighty Lord God, who for the sin of man didst once drown all the world, except eight persons, and afterward of thy great mercy didst promise never to destroy it so again: we humbly beseech thee, that although we for our iniquities have worthily deserved a plague of rain and waters, yet upon our true repentance thou wilt send us such weather, as that we may receive the fruits of the earth in due season; and learn both by thy punishment to amend our lives, and for thy clemency to give thee praise and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

It was enough. Quickly and silently as I could I slipped away into the darkness. I have listened in my time to many prayers of many men; I have

heard the Almighty flattered, complimented, instructed in the metaphysics of his own nature, and insulted by the groveling and insincere self-depreciation of his creatures; I have heard him talked at, and talked about, by cowardly men-pleasers who had no more religion than a rhinoceros; and I have wondered much at the patience of heaven with all this detestable eloquence. I have heard also the short and stumbling prayers of the honest, of the Salvationist kneeling in the thoroughfare of a town full of sin, of the mother with her arms round the neck of a dying child; but none even of these have dealt so shrewd a thrust at my self-satisfaction as did the prayer of Farmer Jeremy. What strange secrets, I thought, are hidden in the human heart! Verily, the ways of man, like the ways of God, are past finding out.

Now, it so happened that I had given Jeremy a promise that I would, that very night, join him at supper and "have a chat." I would gladly have found an excuse if I could. But it was not easy to excuse oneself to Jeremy; his discernments were keen. Moreover, I half feared that he might have discovered my footsteps outside the barn; and I knew that if he had, the only wise course was to face the situation, tell the truth and have it out. It was soon evident, however, that he had discovered nothing; and I, of course, kept my counsel.

I entered the farm kitchen and found Mrs. Jer-

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emy awaiting her husband by the fire. "Master's late in coming home," she said. "He's gone up the hill with a lantern, to set traps in the Grey Barn. He says it's full o' rats. But he ought to have come back half an hour ago."

"He'll be back soon," I answered; and a moment later I heard the ring of his boots on the stone flags outside.

Entering the room, Jeremy, without greeting me, walked across the floor and tapped the barometer on the wall. "It's rising," he said. "I thought it would by the look of the moon last night. Well, given a bit o' fine weather now, we shall not do so badly after all. The wheat's less sprouted than I thought it was; just a little down in 'the Guns,' but none at all in 'Quebec.' Please God, we shall get forty-five to the acre, up there; and all in tip-top condition."

"How are the root-crops?" I asked.

"Looking splendid; couldn't be better. You see, they're all on the high ground."

"Did you set your traps?" said Mrs. Jeremy.

"I did. But there's too many rats for trappin' to do much good. We must try this 'ere new poison. That'll cook their geese for 'em, according to what I hear."

After supper the conversation turned once more on the weather. "It's bound to mend," said Jeremy; "there's a rising glass, and the wind's gone round

to the north-west since I went up the hill. Just look out o' this winder at them clouds drifting across the sky. And they're a lot higher up than they were this afternoon. And I tell you these 'ere prayers as we've been puttin' up in church are bound to do *some* good, though they mayn't do *all* the good as we want. I've noticed it again and again, both wet seasons and droughty."

"The prayer of a righteous man availeth much," said Mrs. Jeremy.

I was sorry the conversation had taken this turn, being disinclined to discuss the subject just then. But Jeremy was ready to take the cue.

"Yes," he said; "and the prayer of a sinner is sometimes *almost* as good as the prayer of a righteous man; though, mind you, I don't say it's *quite* as good. I'm a bit of a sinner myself; but I've had lots of answers to prayer in my life. *Lots*, I tell you. You see, it's this way. My belief is, that you've no business to want a thing unless you're ready to pray for it. Of course, you can't always tell what you ought to want and what you oughtn't—that's the difficulty. But my plan is to pray for everything as I wants and then leave the Lord to sort out the bad from the good. There's a Collect in church as puts it in that way. Mind you, I wouldn't pray for anything as I *knowed* were bad. There'd be no sense in that. And as for fine weather, all points to that being *good*, and your prayer stands

a fair chance of being answered. Of course, it may be bad for reasons we don't know about; though I don't think it is *myself*. So it's right to pray for it. Pray for everything you want—that's what I says; and leave the rest to the Lord."

Jeremy would no doubt have said much more, for he was a great talker when started on his favorite themes, and this was one of them. But we were interrupted by a cry from Mrs. Jeremy at the other side of the table. It was simply, "Oh dear!"

Looking up, I saw that she was leaning forward with her face buried in her hands, sobbing violently.

"Darn my gaiters!" said Jeremy, "I'm nought but a fool. I oughtn't to ha' talked about them things before my missus. I never do; but something's made me forget myself to-night. You see, it's reminded her of our trouble."

I did not understand this last remark. But I asked no question, being too much occupied in watching the infinite tenderness of the good man as he sought to comfort his wife. I draw a veil over that. "Now go to bed, there's a good girl, and think no more about it," was the end of what he had to say.

Mrs. Jeremy retired, the tears standing in her eyes. She shook hands with me, but didn't speak.

Jeremy resumed his seat, lit his pipe, and began

to explain. His voice trembled and almost broke down with the first sentence.

"You see," he said, waving his hand towards the fire, "it's a childless hearth. . . . It hasn't always been. There was one, once—fifteen years ago. He was six years of age—as bright a little nipper as ever you see. Oh yes, he said his prayers: said one too many, that he did. . . . O my God! . . . Well, it was this way. It was one Christmas Eve, and a young lady as we had for his governess had been telling the little nipper all about Father Christmas—I don't blame *her*; she's never got over it any more than we have, and never will— . . . all about Father Christmas, as I was saying; and he drinks it all in with his wide little eyes, as though it was Gospel truth. 'I'll tell Father Christmas to bring me something real nice,' he says. So just before they put him to bed that night he goes to that open fireplace, where you're sitting now, and pops his head up the chimney, and calls out, 'Father Christmas, please bring me to-night a magic lantern, a pair of roller skates, four wax candles, and a box o' them chocolates with the little nuts inside 'em, for Jesus Christ sake, Amen.' Then he goes away from the fire, and I says, 'All right, nipper, I'll bring 'em,' from behind that door, in a voice to make him believe as Father Christmas was answering. Well, he starts to go to bed; but just as he reached them stairs in the passage he runs back, and pops

FARMER JEREMY AND HIS WAYS

his little head up the chimney again. 'Father Christmas,' he says, 'don't forget the little nuts in the chocolates. I don't want none o' them pink 'uns.' And, O my God! he'd hardly spoken the words when more than half a hundredweight of blazing soot comes slathering down the chimney and falls right on the top of him just where he stood. I tell you there never was a thing seen like it since this world began! The room was filled with black smoke in a second; we were all blinded; we could neither breathe nor see. We couldn't see him, we couldn't find him; and we all stumbled up against one another; and the missus fell insensible on the floor. And him screaming with pain all the time—and I tell you I couldn't find him, though I rushed liked a madman all over the room and groped everywhere, and put my hands into the very fire! Then I went too—dropped like a stone. It was all over in a minute. They pulled the rest of us out in the nick of time: but the poor little nipper was burned to death. . . ."

Farmer Jeremy rose from his seat and went to the window. He was shaking all over; but I averted my glance, for it is a terrible thing to see a strong man in the agony of his soul, and the eyes cannot bear it long. "The clouds are breaking," he said; "and, please God, I'll cut 'the Slaughters' to-morrow. But there's one harvest as will never be

THE MAGIC FORMULA

reaped: and there's one cloud that will never break.
Not till the Resurrection Morn. Ah me!"

On the lovely afternoon of an autumn Sunday, about a fortnight after these things, I met Jeremy in the fields, walking the round with his terrier dog.

"Grand weather for farmers," I cried.

"Grand it is, sir," he answered, "and let us be thankful for it."

"Yes," I said; "it has been long enough in the coming, and is all the more welcome now it has come."

"Have you never thought, sir," he said, drawing near to me, "what brought the fine weather?"

I hesitated and was silent.

"Then I'll tell you," said he. "*The power o' prayer.*"

That very day I had been reading a book on Primitive Religion; and as I parted from Jeremy a question flashed through my mind. "May it not be," I asked myself, "that Primitive Religion is the only religion that has ever existed, or will exist, in the world?"

VII

A GRAVEDIGGER SCENE

IT WAS Sunday evening, and the congregation had dispersed. I was making my way into the village church to take a last look at a famous fourteenth-century tomb. Not a soul was visible; but the sound of a pick and the sight of fresh earth announced that the sexton was at work digging a grave. I walked to the spot. A bald head, the shining top of which was now level with the surface of the ground, raised the hope that he would prove to be a sexton of the old school. I was not disappointed.

"Good evening," I said.

"A good evening to you, sir," said the sexton, pausing in his work with the air of a man who welcomed an excuse to rest.

"And whose grave is that you're digging?" I asked.

"Old Sally Bloxham—mother to Tom Bloxham—him as keeps the 'Spotted Pig.' And a bad job for him as she's gone. If it hadn't been for old Sally he'd ha' drunk hisself to death long ago. And who may *you* be?" he asked, as though realizing that

this sudden burst of confidential information was somewhat rash.

"Oh, I'm nobody in particular. Just passing through and taking a look round."

"Ah! there's lots as comes looking round, nowadays. More than there used to be. Why, bless your life, I remember the time when you nivver seed a soul in this village except the home-dwellers. And now there's bicycles and motor cars almost every day. Most on 'em just pokes their noses round, and then off they goes. Some wants to see the tomb inside, and then there's a big stone over an old doorway at the back o' the church, what they calls 'Arrowing o' 'Ell,' though *I* don't know what it means. You've 'eard on it? Well, I suppose it's something wonderful; but *I* could nivver see no 'Arrow and no 'Ell."

"I'll tell you what, sexton," I said, noticing some obviously human bones in the earth at his graveside, "this churchyard needs a bit of new ground."

"Ye're right there," said he, "it's needed that a good many years. But we can't get no new ground. Old Bob Cromwell as owns the lands on that side won't sell, and Lord — won't give, so wot are yer to do? Why, I do believe as there's hundreds and thousands of people buried in this little churchyard. It's a big parish, too, and they've been burying their dead here since nobody knows when. Bones? Why, in some parts there's almost as much bones as there

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is clay. Yer puts in one, and yer digs up two: that's about what it comes to. I sometimes says to my missis, 'I wonder who they'll dig up to make room for me.' 'Yes,' she says, 'and I wonder who you'll be dug up to make room for.' It's scandalous, that's what I says."

"But does the law allow you to disturb these old graves?"

"It does when they're old *enough*. But you can't be over particular in a place no bigger than this. Of course, we're a bit careful like. But ask no questions, and I'll tell yer no lies."

"But this grave you're digging now; how long is it since the last interment was made in the same ground?"

"Well, that's a pretty straight 'un. That's what I call coming to the point!—Thank 'ee, sir—and good luck to you and yours!—However, since you seem a plain-dealing gentleman, I'll tell you summat as I wouldn't tell everybody. You poke your stick about in that soil over there, and you'll find some bits as belonged to Sam Wiggin's grandfather on his mother's side." (I poked my stick as directed.) "That's his tooth you've got now; but I won't swear to it, as things had got a bit mixed, no doubt, afore they put him in. Wait a bit, though. What's under that big lump at the end o' my spade?" (He reached out his spade and touched a clod; I turned it over and revealed the thing it hid: he examined it care-

fully.) "You see, you can generally tell after a bit o' practice what belongs to what. Putting two and two together—what with them bones coming up so regular, and that bit o' coffin furniture right on the top on 'em—I reckon we've struck 'im much as he was put down in '62."

"Are none of his relatives living?" I asked.

"Why, yes, of course they're living. Didn't I tell yer as he was grandfather to Sam Wiggin—that's 'im as farms the Leasowes at t'other end of the village. What'll he say?—why, nothing o' course. Them as sees nothing, says nothing."

"But," I said, "if Sam comes to church next Sunday he'll see his grandfather's bones sticking out all over this grave."

"'Ow's 'e to know they're his grandfather's? There's no name on 'em," said the sexton.

"But surely he will remember that his grandfather was buried in this spot."

"Not 'im! 'E don't bother 'is 'ead about grandfathers. Sam Wiggin! Doesn't know 'e ever had a grandfather. Somebody else might take it up? Not in this parish. Besides, we've all got used to it. Folks here is all mixed up wi' one another while they're living, so they don't mind gettin' a bit mixed when they're dead."

"But is the parson used to it along with the rest of you?"

"Well, yer see, I allus clears up before he comes

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to bury—ribs and shins and big 'un's as won't break up. Skulls breaks up easy; you just catches them a snope with yer spade, and they splits up down the joinin'. Week afore last I dug up two beauties under that yew; anybody might a' kep' them skulls for a museum. I've knowed them as would ha' done it, and sold 'em for eighteenpence apiece. But I couldn't bring my mind to it."

"So you just broke them up, I suppose?"

"No, I didn't. One on 'em belonged to a man as I once knowed; leastways I remember him as a young chap. He was underkeeper at the Hall. The young woman he wanted to marry wouldn't 'ave 'im, so he shot hisself wi' a rook gun. I knowed it was 'im by the 'ole in 'is 'ead, no bigger nor a pea. Just think o' that! No bigger nor a big pea, I tell yer, and as round as if it had been done wi' a punch. I told my missis about it when I went 'ome to my tea. I says, 'Do yer remember 'Arry Pole, the young keeper in the old lord's time, what shot hisself over that affair wi' Polly Towers?' 'Remember 'im?' she says. 'Why, I used to go out walking wi' 'im myself afore he took up wi' Polly.' 'I thought you did,' I says; 'well, there's 'is skull. See that little 'ole in it, clean as if it had been cut wi' a punch? He never shot hisself, not 'e!' Why, bless your heart, doesn't it stand to sense that if 'e'd done it 'isself, he'd a'most ha' blowed 'is 'ead off, leastways made a 'ole a lot bigger nor that? And wot's more, there'd

ha' been a 'ole on the other side, and there wasn't any sign o' one."

"But perhaps it wasn't 'Arry Pole's skull?"

"Yes, it was. Why, where's the sense of its not bein'? I remember his bein' buried as if it was yesterday, and knowed the spot quite well. And do you think it likely that two men 'ud be put in the same grave both wi' rook bullets in their 'eads? If it wasn't 'Arry Pole, who was it?"

"But wasn't all this gone into at the inquest?"

"Well, you see, it's over forty years since it 'appened; but I can remember as the 'ole were looked into, and there was a good deal o' talk at the time. There was two men as said they seed him wi' the gun in his hand, and a mournful look on his face, like. And so, what wi' one thing and another, when they couldn't find who else had killed him, they give the verdict as he must ha' killed hisself. So, you see, they made it out some'ow. But you'll never make me believe 'e did it 'isself—not after I've seen that 'ole."

"I wonder who shot him," I said meditatively.

"Yes, and you'll 'ave to go on wondering till the Judgment Day. You'll find out then. All I can tell yer is that it wasn't me, and it wasn't Polly Towers. However, when I found his skull I didn't break it as I do wi' most on 'em. I just kep' it in a bag and put it back when I filled in the grave.

"But you were askin' me about Parson. Well, I

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telled him the state o' the churchyard when he come to the living. At first he took it pretty easy. 'Hide 'em as far as you can, Johnny,' he says to me. 'And remember there's this great consolation—they'll all be sorted out on the Judgment Day.'

"But one day something 'appened as give Parson a pretty start. It was one of these chaps in motors, I reckon, as did it. I see him one Saturday night rootin' about the churchyard and lookin' behind them laurels where I used to pitch all the bits and bobs of bone as I see lying about. I've often wished I'd took the number on his motor, and then we'd ha' catched him fine! But he was a gentlemanly-looking young feller, and I didn't suspect nothing at the time.

"Well, next morning, when Parson comes to read the Service, what do you think he found? Why, there was a man's thigh-bone, large as life, stuck in the middle of the big Prayer-book at the Psalms for the day. Then, when he opens the Bible to read the lessons, blessed if there wasn't a coffin-plate, worn as thin as a sheet of paper, marking the place. Then he goes into the pulpit, and the first thing he sees was a jawbone full of teeth lyin' on the cushion; there was ribs in the book-rack; there was a tooth in his glass of water; there was bones everywhere—you never see such a sight in all yer life! The young man must ha' taken a basketful into the church. Some he put into the pews, some into the

collectin' boxes, some under the cushions—you never knew where you were going to find 'em next!"

"That was a blackguardly thing to do," I said. "The man who did it deserves the cat."

"So he does," said Johnny. "But I can tell yer, it's made us more partikler ever since. Everything behind them laurel bushes was cleared out and buried next day, and, my eye, you wouldn't believe what a lot there was! Barrer-loads!"

"I'm told that when Lord——, up at the Hall, heard on it, he nearly killed hisself wi' laughin'. There's some folks"—here Johnny lowered his voice—"there's some folks *as thinks that his lordship 'ad a 'and in it hisself*. Some says it was one of them wild chaps as 'e's allus got staying with him. That's more likely, in my opinion. But it wouldn't surprise me, just between you and me, to hear some day that his lordship was going to give us a bit o' new ground."

VIII

THE PROFESSOR'S MARE

I

THE Reverend John Scattergood, D.D., Professor of Systematic Theology, was of Puritan descent. The founder of the family was Caleb Scatter-the-good-seed, a cornet of horse in Cromwell's army, who had earned his master's favor by prowess at the battle of Dunbar. The family tradition averred that when Cromwell halted the pursuit of Leslie's shattered forces for the purpose of singing the 117th Psalm, it was Caleb Scatter-the-good-seed who gave out the tune and led the psalmody. This he did at the beginning of every verse by striking a tuning-fork on his bloody sword. He was mounted, said the tradition, on a coal-black horse.

John Scattergood, D.D., was a hard-headed theologian. His lectures on Systematic Theology ended, as all who attended them will remember, in a cogent demonstration of the Friendliness of the Universe, firmly established by the Inflexible Method. This

was a masterpiece of ratiocination. The impartial observation of facts, the even-handed weighing of evidence, the right ordering of principles and their application, the separation and weaving together of lines of thought, the careful disentangling of necessary pre-suppositions, the just treatment of objectors—all the qualities demanded of one who handles the deepest problems of thought were combined in Dr. Scattergood's demonstration of the Friendliness of the Universe according to the Inflexible Method. Most of his hearers were convinced by his arguments, and went forth into the world to publish the good news that the Universe was friendly.

Hard-headed as Scattergood was, it would be unjust to his character to describe him as free from superstition. Much of his life, indeed, had been spent in attacking the superstitions of the ignorant and the thoughtless; but this very practice had bred in him, as in so many others, a superstitious regard for the argumentative weapons used in the attack. Like his ancestor at Dunbar, he struck his tuning-fork on his sword. To be sure, he was a Rational Theist, and a cause of Rational Theism in others; but, unless I am much mistaken, the ultimate object of his faith, the Power behind his Deity, was the Inflexible Method. Superstition never dies; it merely changes its form. It is not a confession we make to ourselves so much as a charge we bring against others, and its greatest power is always exer-

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cised in directions where we are least aware of its existence. And Scattergood, of course, was unaware that his attitude towards the Inflexible Method was profoundly superstitious. It follows that he was unprepared for the part which superstition, changing its form, was destined to play in his life.

Theology, then, was his vocation, but I have now to add, the horse was his hobby. Although he had taken to riding late in life, he was by no means an incapable rider or an ignorant horseman. Next to the Universe, the horse had been the subject of his profoundest study; and as he was a close reasoner in regard to the one, he was a tight rider in regard to the other. His seat, like his philosophy, was a trifle stiff; but what else could you expect in one who had passed his sixtieth year? He never rode to hounds, nor otherwise unduly jeopardized his neck; but for managing a high-spirited horse, when all the rest of us were in difficulties, I never knew his better. "Let Scattergood go first," we cried as the traction engine came snorting down the road and our elderly hacks were prancing on the pavement; and sure enough his young thoroughbred would walk by the monster without so much as changing its feet.

"Scattergood," I once asked him, "what do you *do* to that young mare of yours when you meet a traction engine or a military band?"

"Nothing," he replied.

"Then what do you *say* to her?"

"Nothing."

"Then how do you manage it?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

Needless to say, he was deeply respected in the stables. "A gen'l'man with a wonderful *'orse-sense*," said the old ostler one day, expatiating, as usual, on Scattergood's virtues. "If I'd had a *'orse-sense* like him, I'd be one o' the richest men in England. If ever there was a man as throwed himself away, there he goes! *'Orse-sense* isn't a thing as you see every day, sir. The only other man I've ever knowed as had it was his Lordship, as I was his coachman in Ireland more than twenty years ago. His Lordship used to say to me, 'Tom,' he says, 'Tom, it all comes of my grandfather and his father before him bein' jockeys.' And between you and me, sir, that's what's the matter with his Reverence. He's jockey-bred, sir, you take my word for it."

"His father was a bishop," I interposed.

"Well, his father may have been a bishop, for all I care," said Tom. "But what about his mother, and what about his mother's father, and his father before him, and all the rest on 'em? When it comes to a matter o' breedin', you don't stop at fathers; you take in the whole pedigree. Wasn't his Lordship's father a brewer? And what difference did that make? When *'orse-sense* once gets started in a family it takes more than brewin' and more than bishopin' to wash it out o' the blood."

"I've heard that gypsies have the same gift," I said.

"I've 'eard it too, sir. But I never would have nothing to do with gypsies; though his Lordship was as thick as thieves with 'em. And thieves are just what they are, sir, and if it weren't for that I'd say as the gen'l'man was as like to be gypsy-bred as jockey. Don't you never let the gypsies sell *you* a 'oss, sir; you'll be took in if you do. But they couldn't gypsy *him*! Why, I don't believe as there's a 'oss-dealer for twenty miles round as wouldn't go out for a walk if he 'eard as Dr. Scattergood was comin' to buy a 'oss."

That the ostler's last remark was true in the spirit if not in the letter the following incident seems to prove. Once I was myself entrapped into the folly of buying a horse, and I was on the point of concluding the bargain, which seemed to be all in my favor, when a friendly daimon whispered in my ear that I had better be cautious. So I said, "Yes, the horse seems all right. But before coming to a final decision, I'll bring Dr. Scattergood round to have a look at him." And the dealer promptly abated his price by twenty pounds, on the understanding that "that there interferin' Scattergood, as had already done him more bad turns than one, was not allowed to poke his nose into business which was none of his."

"Pretty good," said the Professor when I showed

him my purchase. "Pretty good. But I think I could have saved you another ten pounds, had you taken the trouble to consult me."

He kept but one horse, and it was observed, as a strange thing in a lover of horses, that he never kept that one for long. He was constantly changing his mount. By superficial observers this was set down to a certain fickleness of disposition; but the truth seems rather to have been that Scattergood, consciously or unconsciously, was engaged in the quest for the Perfect Horse. No man knew better than he what equine perfection involved, and none was ever more painfully sensitive to the slightest deviation from the Absolute Ideal. Whatever good qualities his horse might possess—and they were always numerous—the presence of a single fault, however slight, would haunt and oppress him in much the same way as a venial sin will trouble the consciousness of a saint. I remember one beautiful animal in which the severest judges could find no defect save that it had half a dozen miscolored hairs hidden away on one of its hind-legs. Every time the good doctor rode that horse he saw the miscolored hairs through the back of his head; and away went the beast to Tattersall's after a week's trial. Another followed, and another after that; but we soon ceased to count them, and took it for granted that Scattergood's horse, seen once, would not be seen again. So it went on until in the fullness of

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time there appeared a horse, or more strictly a mare, which did *not* depart as swiftly as it came.

Whatever perfection may be in other realms, perfection in horses seems after all to be a relative thing; for though Dr. Scattergood himself regarded this one as perfect, I doubt if he could have found a single soul in the wide world to agree with him. To be sure, she was beautiful enough to cause a flutter of excitement as she passed down the street; but a beast of more dangerous mettle never pranced on two feet or kicked out with one. She was the terror of every stable she entered, and it was only by continual largesse on the part of Scattergood that any groom could be induced to feed or tend her. What she cost him monthly for tips, for broken stable furniture, and for veterinary attendance on the horses she kicked in the ribs, I should be sorry to say. But Scattergood paid it all without a murmur; no infatuated lover ever bore the extravagance of his mistress with a lighter heart. For the truth of the matter was, that he was deeply attached to this mare, and the mare was deeply attached to him.

Why the mare was fond of Scattergood is a problem requiring for its solution more horse-sense than most of us possess; so we had better leave it alone. But Scattergood's reason for being fond of the mare can be stated in a sentence. She reminded him, constantly and vividly, of Ethelberta. Her high spirits, her dash, her unexpectedness, her brilliant

eyes, her gait, and especially the carriage of her head, were a far truer likeness of Ethelberta than was the faded photograph, or even the miniature set in gold, which the reverend professor kept locked in his secret drawer.

Now Ethelberta was the name of the lady whom Scattergood wished he had married. For five-and-thirty years he had never ceased wishing he had married *her*—and not someone else. Someone else! Ay, there was the rub! The lawful Mrs. Scattergood was not a person whose portrait I should care to draw in much detail. Can you imagine a harder lot than that of a world-famous Systematic Theologian, publicly pledged to maintain the Friendliness of the Universe, but privately consumed with anxiety lest on returning home (*horresco referens!*) he should find a heavy-featured, blear-eyed, irredeemable woman, the woman who called herself his wife, narcotized on the drawing-room sofa, with an empty bottle of chloral at her side? That was the lot of John Scattergood, D.D., and he bore it like a man, keeping up a pathetic show of devotion to his intolerable wife, and concealing his personal misery from the world with an ingenuity only equal to that with which he published abroad the Friendliness of the Universe.

To be sure, he had long abandoned the quest for happiness as a thing unworthy of a Systematic Theologian—what else, indeed, could he do?

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Still, it was hardly possible to avoid reflecting that he would have been happier if he had married the long lost Ethelberta. Each day something happened to convince him that he would. For example, his first duty every morning, before settling down to work, was to make a tour of the house, sometimes in the company of a trusted domestic, hunting for a concealed bottle of morphia; and when at last the servant, with her arm under a mattress, said, "I've got it, sir," he could not help reflecting that the burden of life would have been lighter had he married the high-souled Ethelberta. And with the thought a cloud seemed to pass between John Scattergood and the sun.

He would often say to himself that he wished he could forget Ethelberta. But in point of fact he wished nothing of the kind. He secretly cherished her memory, and the efforts he made to banish her from his thoughts only served to incorporate her more completely with the atmosphere of his life.

All through life John Scattergood had been a deeply conscientious man. But conscience—or rather something that called itself conscience, but was in reality nothing of the kind,—which had served him so well in other respects, had been his undoing in the matter of Ethelberta. At the age of twenty-five he was not aware that a man's evil genius, bent on doing its victim the deadliest turn, will often disguise itself in the robes of his heavenly

guide. Later on in life he learned to penetrate these disguises, but at twenty-five he was at their mercy. He was, as we have seen, of Puritan descent; his evangelical upbringing had taught him to regard as heaven-sent all inner voices which bade him sacrifice his happiness; and this it was of which the enemy took advantage. In his relationship with Ethelberta the young man was radiantly happy; but that very circumstance aroused his suspicions. "You are not worthy of this happiness," said an inner voice; "and, what is far more to the point, you are not worthy of Ethelberta. She is too good for such as you."

"Who are you?" said the young Scattergood, addressing the inner voice. "Who are you that haunt me night and day with this horrible fear?"

"I am your Conscience," answered the lying voice. "You are unworthy of Ethelberta; and it is I, your Conscience, that tells you so. I am a voice from heaven, and beware of disregarding me."

Had Scattergood been thirty years older, this strange anxiety on the part of his conscience to establish its claims as a voice from heaven would have put him on his guard; he would have lifted those shining robes and seen the hoofs beneath them. But these precautions had not occurred to him in the days when he and Ethelberta were walking hand in hand. So he listened to that inner voice with awe: he listened until its lying words became an obsession; until they darkened his mind; until they

drowned the voices of love and began to find utterance in his manners, and even in his speech, with Ethelberta. She, on her part, did not understand—what woman ever could or would?—and a cloud came between them. “The cloud is from heaven,” said the inner voice. “I have sent it; let it grow; you are not good enough for Ethelberta, and it will be a sin to link your life with hers.”

So the cloud grew, till one day a woman's wrath shot out of it; there was an explosion, a quarrel, a breach; and the two parted, never to meet again. “You have done your duty,” said the false conscience. “You have dealt me a mortal hurt,” said the soul. But Scattergood was still convinced that he was not good enough for Ethelberta.

Within a year or two the usual results had followed. Scattergood married a woman who was not good enough for *him*; and that other man, who had been watching his opportunity, like a wolf around the sheepfold, married Ethelberta. And he was not good enough for *her*.

And now many years had passed, and Ethelberta was long since dead. But that made no difference to the aching wound; for Professor Scattergood, who was intelligent about all things, and far too intelligent about Ethelberta, used to reflect that probably she would still be alive had she married him. “They went to Naples for their honeymoon,” he would say aloud—for he was in the habit of talking to him-

self—"they went to Naples for their honeymoon; there she caught typhoid fever, and died six weeks after her marriage. But things would have happened differently had she married *me*. *We* were not going to Naples for the honeymoon. We were going to Switzerland: we settled it that night after the dance at Lady Brown's—the night I first told her I was not worthy of her. Fool that I was!" Such were the meditations of Professor John Scattergood, D.D., as he trotted under the hedgerow elms and heard the patter of his horse's hoofs falling softly on the withered leaves.

Thus we can understand how it came to pass that Dr. Scattergood's imagination was abnormally sensitive to anything which could remind him of Ethelberta. And I have no doubt that his peculiar horse-sense was also involved in the particular reminder with which we have now to deal.

Certain it is that he discerned the resemblance to Ethelberta the moment he cast eyes upon his new mare. He was standing in the dealer's yard, and the dealer was leading the animal out of the stable. Suddenly catching sight of the strange black-coated figure, she stopped abruptly, lowered her head, curved her neck, and looked Scattergood straight between the eyes. For a moment he was paralyzed with astonishment and thought he was dreaming. The movement, the attitude, the look were all Ethelberta's! Exactly thus had she stopped abruptly,

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lowered her head, curved her neck, and looked him in the face when thirty-five years ago he had been introduced to her at an Embassy Ball in Vienna. A vision swept over his inner eye: he saw bright uniforms, heard music, felt the presence of a crowd; and so completely was the actuality of things blotted out that he made a low reverence to the animal as though he were being introduced to some high-born dame. The dealer noticed the movement and wondered what "new hanky-panky old Scattergood was trying on the mare."

"Now, that's a mare I raised myself," said the dealer. "I've watched her every day since she was foaled, and I'll undertake to say as there isn't another like her in—"

"In the wide world: I know there isn't," said Scattergood, cutting him short. Then, suddenly, "What's her name?"

"Meg," replied the dealer, who was expecting a very different question.

"Meg—Meg," said the Doctor. "Why, it ought to be— Well, never mind, Meg will do. So you bred her yourself? Will you swear you didn't *steal* her?"

This was too much even for a horse-dealer. "We're not a firm of horse-thieves," he said, and he was preparing to lead her back into the stable.

"I'm only joking," said Scattergood in a tremulous voice which belied him. "She's the living like-

ness of one I remember years ago—one that *was* stolen. Come, bring her back. I'm ready to buy that mare at her full value."

"And what may that be?" replied the dealer, glad that the enemy had made the first move.

"A hundred and twenty."

The dealer was astonished; for his customer had offered the exact sum at which he hoped to sell the mare. For a moment he thought of standing out for a hundred and fifty, but he knew it was useless to bargain with Scattergood, so he said:

"It's giving her away, sir, at a hundred and twenty. But for the sake of quick business, and you being a gentleman as knows a horse when you sees one, I'll take you at your own figure."

"Done," said Scattergood. "I'll send you a cheque round in ten minutes." And without another word he walked out of the yard. He had found the Perfect Horse.

The dealer stood dumbfounded, halter in hand—he was unconscious that Meg had already caught his shirt-sleeve between her teeth. Could that retreating figure be the wary Scattergood, Scattergood of the thousand awkward questions, Scattergood the terror of every horse-dealer in the countryside? Never before had he found so prompt, so reckless a customer. Were his eyes deceiving him? Was it a dream? A violent jerk on his right arm, and the simultaneous sound of tearing linen, recalled

him to himself. "You she-devil!" he said, "I'll take the skin off you for this. *But I hope the old gentleman's well insured.*"

Meanwhile the Professor was walking home in a state of profound mental perturbation. Visions of the Embassy Ball in Vienna, Buddhist theories of reincarnation, problems of animal psychology, doubts as to the validity of the Inflexible Method, vague and nameless feelings that accompanied the disappearance of his "horse-sense," a yet vaguer joy as of one who has found something precious which he had lost, and beneath all the ever-present subconscious fear that he would find his wife narcotized on the drawing-room sofa, were buzzing and dancing through his mind.

"It's the *likeness* that puzzles me," he began to reflect. "A universal resemblance, borne by particulars not one of which is really like the original. Quite unmistakable, and yet quite unthinkable. An indubitable fact, and yet a fact which no one who has not seen could ever be induced to believe."

Had anyone half an hour earlier propounded the statement that a woman could bear a closer resemblance to a horse than to her own portrait, he would have treated the proposition as one which no amount of evidence could make good. So far from the evidence proving the proposition true, he would have said, it is the proposition which proves the evidence false. Otherwise, what is the use of the Inflexible

Method? But now the thing was flashed on him with the brightness of authentic revelation, and there was no gainsaying its truth. Not once during the five-and-thirty years of his mourning for Ethelberta had anything happened to bring her so vividly to mind; not even among the dreams that haunt the borderland of sleep and waking; no, nor even when he listened to the great singer whose voice had pierced his heart with the sad and angry music of Heine's bitterest song. Professor Scattergood was a firm believer in the efficacy of *a priori* thought; but though by means of it he had excogitated a system in which the plan of an entire Universe was sufficiently laid down, there was not one of his principles either primary or secondary which could have built a niche for the experience he had just undergone in the horse-dealer's yard.

As he neared his doorstep the confusion of his mind suddenly ranged itself into form and gave birth to an articulate thought. "I'm sure," he said to himself, drawing his latch-key out of his pocket and inserting it in the keyhole—"I'm sure that Ethelberta is not far off. Yes, as sure as I am of anything in this world."

II

The "horse-sense," which gave Professor Scattergood his reputation in the stables, was always

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accompanied by a well-marked physical sensation—to wit, a continuous tingling at the back of the head, seemingly located at an exact spot in the cortex of the brain. So long as the back of his head was tingling, every horse was completely at Scattergood's mercy; he could do with it whatever he willed. But I have it on his own authority that at the moment he cast eyes on his new mare the sensation suddenly ceased and his horse-sense deserted him.

The first time he took her out he mounted with trepidation, and fear possessed his soul that she would run away with him. Though nothing very serious followed, the fear was not entirely groundless. His daily ride, which usually occupied exactly two hours and five minutes, was accomplished on this occasion in one hour and twenty, and for a week afterwards the Professor's man rubbed liniment into his back three times a day. On the second occasion he had the ill luck to encounter the local Hunt in full career, a thing he would have minded not the least under ordinary circumstances, but extremely disconcerting at a moment when his horse-sense happened to be in abeyance. Before he had time to take in the situation, Meg joined the rushing tide, and for the next forty minutes the field was led by the first Systematic Theologian in Europe, who had given himself up for lost and was preparing for death. And killed he probably would have been but for two things: the first was the fine qualities of

his mount, and the second was a literary reminiscence which enabled him to retain his presence of mind. Even in these desperate circumstances, the Professor's habit of talking to himself remained in force. A friend of mine who was riding close behind him told me that he distinctly heard Scattergood repeating the lines of the *Odyssey* which tell how Ulysses, on the point of suffocation in the depths of the sea, kept his wits about him and made a spring for his raft the instant he rose to the surface. Again and again, as the Professor raced across the open, did he repeat those lines to himself; and whenever a dangerous fence or ditch came in sight he would break off in the middle of the Greek and cry aloud in English, "Now, John Scattergood, prepare for death and sit well back"—resuming the Greek the moment he was safely landed on the other side, and thus proving once more that the blood of the Ironsides still ran in his veins.

Said a farmer to me one day:

"Who's that gentleman as has just gone up the lane on the chestnut mare?"

"That," said I, "is Professor Scattergood—one of our greatest men."

"H'm," said the farmer; "I reckon he's a clergyman—to judge by his clothes."

"He is."

"Well, he's a queer 'un for a clergyman, danged if he isn't. He's allus talking aloud to himself. And

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what do you think I hear him say when he come through last Thursday? 'John Scattergood,' says he, 'you were a damned fool. Yes, there's no other word for it, John; you were a *damned* fool!'"

"That," I said, "is language which no clergyman ought to use, not even when he is talking to himself on horseback. But perhaps the words were not his own. They may have been used about him by some other person—possibly by his wife, who, people say, is a bit of a Tartar. In that case he would be just repeating them to himself, by way of refreshing his memory."

The farmer laughed at this explanation. "I see you're a gentleman with a kind 'eart," said he. "But a man with a swearin' wife don't ride about the country lanes refreshin' his memory in that way. He knows his missus will do all the refreshin' he wants when he gets 'ome. No, you'll never persuade *me* as them words weren't the gentleman's own. From the way he said 'em you could see as they tasted good. Why, he said 'em just like this—"

And the farmer repeated the objectionable language, with a voice and manner that entirely disposed of my charitable theory. He then added: "Clergyman or no clergyman, I'll say one thing for him—he rides a good 'oss. I'll bet you five to one as that chestnut mare cost him a hundred and twenty guineas, if she cost him a penny."

From the tone in which the farmer said this I

gathered that a gentleman whose 'oss cost him a hundred and twenty guineas was entitled to use any language he liked; and that my explanation, therefore, even if true, was superfluous.

What did the Professor mean by apostrophizing himself in the strong language overheard by the farmer? The exegesis of the passage, it must be confessed, is obscure, and, not unnaturally, there is a division of opinion among the higher critics. Some, of whom I am one, argue that the words refer to a long-past error of judgment in the Professor's life; more precisely, to the loss of Ethelberta. Others maintain that this theory is far-fetched and fanciful. The Professor, they say, was plainly cursing himself for the purchase of Meg. For, is there not reason to believe that at the very moment when the obnoxious words were uttered he was again in trouble with the mare, and therefore in a state of mind likely to issue in the employment of this very expression?

Meg's behavior that day had been irritating to the last degree. She began by insisting on the wrong side of the road, and before Professor Scattergood could emerge from the traffic of the town he had been threatened with legal proceedings by two policemen and cursed by several drivers of wheeled vehicles. Arrived in the open country, Meg spent her time in examining the fields on either side of the road, in the hope apparently of again discov-

ering the Hunt; she would dart down every lane and through every open gate, and now and then would stop dead and gaze at the scenery in the most provoking manner. Coming to a blacksmith's shop with which she was acquainted, a desire for new shoes possessed her feminine soul, and, suddenly whisking round through the door of the shoeing shed, she knocked off the Professor's hat and almost decapitated him against the lintel. The Professor had not recovered from the shock of this incident when a black Berkshire pig that was being driven to market came in sight round a turn of the road. Meg, as became a highbred horse, positively refused to pass the unclean thing, or even to come within twenty yards of it. She snorted and pranced, reared and curveted, and was about to make a bolt for home when the pig-driver, who had considerably driven his charge into a field where it was out of sight, seized Meg's bridle and led her beyond the dangerous pass.

"Meg, Meg," said the Professor, as soon as they were alone and order had been restored—"Meg, Meg, this will never do. You and I will have to part company. I don't mind your *looking* like Ethelberta, but I can't allow you to *act* as she did. To be sure, Ethelberta broke my heart thirty-five years ago. But that is no reason why I should suffer *you* to break my neck to-day. We'll go home, Meg, and I'll take an early opportunity of breaking off the

engagement, just as I broke it off with Ethelberta—though, between you and me, Meg, I was a damned fool for doing it.”

Professor Scattergood spoke these words in a low, soft, musical voice; the voice he always used when talking to horses or to himself about Ethelberta. Even the obnoxious adjective was pronounced by the Professor with that tenderness of intonation which only a horse or a woman can fully understand. And here I must explain that this particular tone came to him naturally in these two connections only. In all others his voice was high-pitched, hard, and a trifle forced. Years of lecturing on Systematic Theology had considerably damaged his vocal apparatus. He had developed a throat-clutch; he had a distressing habit of ending all his sentences on the rising inflection; and whenever he was the least excited in argument he had a tendency to scream. It was in this voice that he addressed his class. But whenever he happened to be talking to horses, or to himself about Ethelberta—and you might catch him doing so almost any time when he was alone,—you would hear something akin to music, and would reflect what a pity it was that Professor Scattergood had never learned to sing.

It was, I say, in this low, soft, musical voice that he addressed his mare, perhaps with some exceptional sadness, on the day when, sorely tried by her bad behavior, he had come to the conclusion that

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the engagement must be broken off. And now I must once more risk my reputation for veracity; and if the pinch comes and I have to defend myself from the charge of lying, I shall appeal for confirmation to my old friend the ostler, who knows a great deal about 'osses, and believes my story through and through. What happened was this.

The moment Professor Scattergood began to address his mare in the tones aforesaid, she stood stock-still, with ears reversed in the direction from which the sounds were coming. When he had finished, a gentle quiver passed through her body. Then, suddenly lowering her head, she turned it round with a quick movement towards the off stirrup, and slightly bit the toe of Professor Scattergood's boot. This done, she recovered her former attitude of attention, and again reversed her ears as though awaiting a response. Taking in the meaning of her act with a swift instinct which he never allowed to mar his treatment of Systematic Theology, the professor said one word—"Ethelberta"; and the word had hardly passed his lips when something began to tingle at the back of his head. Instantly the mare broke into the gentlest and evenest canter that ever delighted a horseman of sixty years; carried him through the remainder of his ride without a single hitch, shy, or other misdemeanor, and brought him to his own doorstep in exactly two hours and five minutes from the time he had left it.

Thenceforward, until the last day of his life, he never had the slightest trouble with his mare. That is the story which the ostler believes through and through.

Next day the Professor said to this man:

"Tom, I'm going to change the name of my mare."

"You can't do that, sir. You'll never get her to answer to a new name."

"I mean to try, anyhow. Here"—and he slipped half a sovereign into the man's hand. "You make this mare answer to the name of *Ethelberta*, and I'll give you as much more when it's done."

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the man, slipping the coin into his pocket—"Beg your pardon, sir, but there never was a 'oss with a name like that. It's not a 'oss's name at all, sir."

"Never mind that. Do as I tell you, and you won't regret it. *Ethelberta*—don't forget."

The groom touched his hat. Professor Scattergood left the stables, and presently the groom and his chief pal were rolling in laughter on a heap of straw.

A fortnight later the groom said:

"The mare answers wonderful well to that new name, sir. Stopped her kicking and biting altogether, sir. Why, the day before we give it her, she tore the shirt off my back and bit a hole in my breeches as big as a mangel-wurzel."

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"I'll pay for both of them," said Professor Scattergood.

"Thank 'ee, sir. But since we give her the new name she's not even made as though she *wanted* to bite anybody. And as for kicking, why, you might take tea with your mother-in-law right under her heels and she wouldn't knock a saucer over. I nivver see such a thing in all my life, and don't expect nivver to see such another! *Wonderful's* what I calls it! Though, since I've come to think of it, there *was* once a 'oss named Ethelberta as won the Buddle Stakes. Our foreman says as he remembers the year it won. Maybe as you had a bit yourself, sir, on that 'oss—though beg your pardon for saying so."

"Yes," said the Professor, "I backed Ethelberta for all I was worth, and won ten times as much. Only, some fellow stole the winnings out of my—my inner pocket just before I got home. It was thirty-five years ago."

"So it was a bit o' bad luck after all, sir?"

"It was," said Scattergood, "extremely bad luck."

"Did they ever catch the man, sir?"

"They did. They caught him within a year after the theft."

"I expect they give it 'im 'ot, sir?"

"Yes. He got a life-sentence, the same as mi—the same as that man got who was convicted the other day."

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At this lame conclusion the groom looked puzzled, and Scattergood had to extricate himself. "You see, Tom," he went on, "the value of what I lost was enormous."

"It must have been a tidy haul to get the thief a sentence like that," said Tom. "But maybe he give you a tap on the head into the bargain, sir."

"He put a knife into me," said Scattergood, "and the wound aches to this day."

For some reason he felt an unwonted pleasure in pursuing this conversation with the sympathetic groom, and inwardly resolved that he would give him a handsome tip.

"Put a *knife* into you, did he?" cried Tom. "Why, that's just like what happened to *me* when I was coachman to his Lordship. We was livin' in Ireland, and it was the days of the Land League. Me and his Lordship had been to Ballymunny Races, and his Lordship had got his pockets stuffed full o' money as he'd won, and I don't say I hadn't won a bit myself, seein' as I allus backed the same 'osses as he did. Well, we had about fifteen miles to drive in the dark, and before we starts his Lordship says to me, 'Tom, my lad,' he says, 'go round the town and buy me the most grievous big stick you can find in the place.' 'What's that for, my Lord?' I says, for me and his Lordship was a'most like brothers. 'Tom,' he says, 'I've been losin' my 'orse-sense all day, and whenever that happens I knows there's

trouble a-brewin'.' So I goes and buys him a stick, and a beauty it were, too, made o' bog oak, and that 'eavy that I couldn't 'elp feelin' sorry for the wife o' the man as was goin' to get it on the top of 'is 'ead. 'All right, Tom,' says his Lordship as he jumps on the car; 'and give the reins a turn round the palm o' your 'and.' So off we starts, and we 'adn't gone more than four miles when three men springs out on us just like shadows. 'Look out, my Lord,' I shouts; 'there's three on 'em!' His Lordship, as was sitting just behind me, he hits out splendid, and I could 'ear his big stick going crack, crack on their 'eads. 'Well done, my Lord!' I shouts. 'Hit 'em, my Lord!' I says; 'give it 'em 'ome-brewed!' 'It's hittin' 'em that I'm after,' says he. 'I've made one on 'em comfortable. Tom, you're a great boy for choosin' a stick; but what's become o' that big fellow?' 'He's on the near side, creepin' under the car,' I says; 'look out for that one, my Lord; he's got a knife!' And I was just givin' the reins another turn round the palm o' my 'and when I feels summat sharp under my right shoulder-blade, and I begins catchin' my breath. The last as I remember was seein' his Lordship bendin' over me, like as if he'd been my own mother. 'Tom, my own darlin',' he says, 'if the black villains have killed you, it's a sorrowin' man I'll be for the rest of my days. But I've given that big one a sleepin'-draught as he won't wake up till the Angel

Gabriel knocks at his bedroom door.'—I'd got it proper, I can tell you! Touched the lung, too, that it did; and whenever I catches a bit o' cold and begins coughin', it's that painful that I can't——"

"Ay, ay," said Scattergood. "Well, here's something that's good for an old wound—though," he muttered to himself, as he rode away, "it never made much difference to mine." He had given the man a sovereign.

As the Professor walked his horse down the yard, Tom said to his pal, "'E must ha' bin a warm 'un in his young days. Good-'earted, too. But why the old bloke should call his 'oss Ethelberta, seeing he lost his money after all, licks me 'oller."

"Just look at the pair on 'em!" said the pal. "Why, to see that mare walkin' down the yard, you might think as she was a little gel goin' to Sunday-school. But you'll never persuade *me* as she isn't foxin'. She'll do a down on him yet, you mark my word! She's as tricky as a woman. I can see it in her eye."

"Ha!" said Tom, "that reminds me of something his Lordship once said to me. It 'appened at the Dublin 'Orse Show, as his Lordship was one o' the judges, with me by to 'elp 'im. There was a roan mare just brought into the ring, and his Lordship says to me, lookin' 'ard at the mare all the time, 'Tom, my boy,' he says, 'did you ever 'ave a sweet-heart?' 'Yes, my Lord,' I says, 'several.' 'Are they

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livin' or dead?" says he. 'I never killed none on 'em, my Lord,' I says; 'that's all *I* knows about it.' 'Treat 'em 'andsome, my boy, treat 'em 'andsome,' says he in the solemnest voice you ever 'eard; 'it's desperate bad luck on a man as has to do wi' 'osses when a' angry sweetheart dies on him. And look 'ere, Tom,' he says in a whisper, 'from the way the back o' my 'ead's a-tinglin', *it's a' angry sweetheart as we're judgin' now*.—Pass her down,' he says to the groom as were leadin' the mare, 'pass her down. Divil a prize shall that one have! She's a dangerous bad 'oss.'"

III

By long and devious ways, John Scattergood had thus arrived at the point from which he had set out; he had arrived, I mean, at that extremely common state of mind when one actual smile seen on the face of the world, or a moment of contact with any one of the innumerable friendly presences which the world harbors, was worth more to him, both as philosopher and man, than were all the achievements of the Inflexible Method, past, present, and to come. And I have now to record that such a smile was vouchsafed to him, and such a living contact provided, by the mediation of a four-footed beast.

Let no one suppose, however, that our Professor

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was led astray by fatuous fancies concerning his mare. He did not jump to the conclusion that she was a reincarnation of the long-lost Ethelberta. The Inflexible Method, thank God, saved him from that. But if you ask me how it all came about, I am bound to confess I don't know. All we can be sure of is that his mare did for Professor Scattergood something which a lifetime of reflection had been unable to accomplish. No doubt the lifetime of reflection had dried the fuel. But it was the influence of Ethelberta that brought the flame.

"It's quite true," he said one day, "that I prepare my lectures on horseback; and people tell me that I have fallen into a habit of preparing them aloud. But the fact is, I am going to deliver a new course; and I find that horse-exercise quickens the action of the brain—a necessary thing at my time of life, when one's powers of expression are on the wane, and new ideas increasingly difficult to put into form."

"You ride a beautiful animal," said his interlocutor.

"Yes, and as good as she's beautiful." And then in his softest voice he repeated the line:

"Tra bell' e buona, non so qual fosse piu."

This favorable view of the new Ethelberta's qualities was by no means convincing to Professor Scat-

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tergood's friends. We knew she was "bella"; but we doubted the "buona." The spectacle of an elderly Doctor of Divinity setting out for his daily ride on a magnificent race horse in the pink of condition was indeed a vision to fill the bold with astonishment and the timid with alarm. "The man is mad," said some; "will no one warn him of his danger?" Various attempts were made, but they came to nothing. Knowing myself to be the least cogent of advisers, I kept silence to the last; but when all the others had failed I resolved to try my hand.

"Scattergood," I said, "that thoroughbred of yours is not a suitable mount for a man of your years. She ought to be ridden by a jockey. I wish to Heaven you would sell her."

"Nothing in this world would induce me to part with Ethelberta," he answered.

"I'm sorry to hear it. There's no man living in England at this moment whose life is more precious than yours. We can't afford to lose you. Then think of your——" I was going to say "your wife," but I checked myself in time: "Think of your work. It's a very serious matter. Sure as fate that brute"—("She's not a *brute*," he interrupted)—"sure as fate that beauty will run away with you one of these days and break your neck."

"How do you know that?" he asked quietly.

"Because she's run away with you twice already, and you escaped only by a miracle. She'll do it

again, and next time you may not be quite so fortunate."

"She'll never do it again," he said in the same quiet voice.

"How do you know that?" I said, thinking that I had turned the tables on him.

"Never mind how. I know it well enough."

"By the Inflexible Method?"

"Of course not," he said with some annoyance. "There are different kinds of certainty, and this is one of the most certain of all."

"More certain than the Inflexible——?"

"Oh, damn the Inflexible Method!" he cried. "I'm sick to death of it. You'll do me a kindness by not mentioning it again."

"All right; I'm as sick of it as you are. After all, it's not your philosophy I'm thinking of; what I am concerned about is your life. Now, Scattergood," I added—for I was an old friend,—"frankly, between you and me, don't you think you're a fool?"

"My dear fellow, I am and always have been a ——" and here he used that objectionable word—"always have been a certain sort of fool. But not about Ethelberta. We understand each other perfectly. She looks after me and takes care of me like a—like a mother. My life is absolutely safe in her hands—I mean, of course, on her back."

"Confound those mixed metaphors!" I cried. "That's the seventh I've heard to-day, and they're

horribly confusing, even when they are corrected as you corrected yours. Now, what on earth do you mean?"

He looked at me curiously. "I mean," he said, "that Ethelberta may be trusted to the uttermost."

"Scattergood," I said, "there's a sort of friendship in the Universe which does not scruple on occasion to break every bone in a man's body, and I greatly fear that Ethelberta may be one of its ministers. Now, here's a plain question. Would you be prepared to stand before your class to-morrow morning and bid them trust the Universe for no better reasons than those on which you trust your life to the tender mercies of that bru— of Ethelberta?"

"I only wish I could find them reasons half as good."

"Half as good as what?"

"As those for which I trust my life to Ethelberta."

"What are they?"

"I can't tell you. If I did tell, the reasons would lose their force. But until they are uttered they are quite conclusive."

"What?" I cried; "are the reasons *taboo*? Have you found a magic formula?"

"Don't jest," he said. "The matter's far too serious. There is more at stake than the mere safety of my life."

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"Then you admit your life *is* at stake," said I; and I thought I had scored a point.

"No, I don't. But other things are—things of far greater importance. My life, however, runs no risk from Ethelberta."

"Then tell me this. Who runs the bigger risk—you who trust your life to a beast for no reasons you can assign; or we, your disciples, who trust ourselves to the Universe in the name of your philosophy?"

"By far the bigger risk," he answered, "is yours."

"Then you mean to say that you have better reasons for trusting your beast than we have for trusting your system?"

"I do."

"You are quite serious?"

"I am."

"But follow this out," I said. "If we, your disciples, run the bigger risk in trusting ourselves to your system, you, its author, run the same risk yourself."

"You're strangely mistaken," he answered.

"Surely," said I, "we are all in the same boat. What reasons can you have, other than those you have given us, for trusting your conclusion as to the friendliness of the Universe?"

"You forget," he said. "In addition to the reasons I have given you, I have all those which induce me to trust my life to Ethelberta."

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"But how do they affect your philosophy?"

"They affect it vitally."

"In the way of confirmation or otherwise?"

"Confirmation."

"You mean that your philosophy is already conclusively proved, and yet made more conclusive by Ethelberta?"

"Put it that way, if you like."

"Is there no hope," I asked, "that you will be able one day to communicate the reasons to *us*?"

"None," he answered. "But what I can do, and will do, if I live long enough, is to show that all of you are acting much as I am acting in regard to Ethelberta."

"But we are not all risking our lives on thoroughbred horses."

"You are running far bigger risks than that," he said; "and you are fools not to see it. Did I not tell you that I am revising my lectures?"

"Scattergood," I said, "it's plain to me that you will have to do one of two things. Either you must radically change your system—or you must sell Ethelberta. Personally, I hope you'll do the last."

"In any case," he replied, "I shall not sell Ethelberta."

"Then," said I, "may the friendly Universe preserve you from being killed." And with that I took my departure.

IV

That very afternoon, Professor Scattergood, arrayed in a pair of goodly riding-boots, went round to the stables to mount his mare. The groom met him as usual.

"She's been wonderful restless all night, sir," said he. "She's broke her halter and a'most kicked the door out. And she's bitin' as though she'd just been married to the devil's son."

"She wants exercise," said Scattergood. "Put the saddle on at once."

"Not me, sir!" answered the groom. "It's as much as a man's life's worth to go near her."

"Bring me the saddle, then, and I'll do it myself," said Scattergood. He opened the door of the stable, and the moment the light was let in Ethelberta announced her intentions by a smashing kick on the wooden partition.

"Have a care, sir," cried the terrified groom, as Scattergood, with the saddle on his arm, passed through the door. "She'll give you no time to say yer prayers. Look out, sir! She'll whip round on you like a bit o' sin and put her heel through you before you know where you are. Good Lord!" he added, addressing another man, "it's a *hexecution*! The gen'l'man'll be in heaven in less than half a minute."

"Ethelberta, Ethelberta, what's the meaning of all

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this?" said Scattergood in a quiet voice, as he faced the animal's blazing eyes. "Come, come, sweetheart, let us behave for once like rational beings." And he put his arm round Ethelberta's neck and rubbed his cheek against her nose.

In five minutes the saddle was on, and Scattergood, seated on as quiet a beast as ever submitted to bridle, was riding down the stable-yard.

"That ole Johnnie knows a trick or two about 'osses," said the groom as soon as the Professor was out of hearing. "I'd give a month's wages to know how he quieted that mare. Did ye 'ear 'im talkin' to 'er, Bill? Well, could you 'ear what 'e said? No? Well, you listen the next time you 'ear 'im talkin' to her and see if you can get the very words 'e says. It's the *words* as does it; and if we can find out what they are, it'll be worth 'undreds o' pounds to you and me. I tell yer, it's the *words* as does it! I reckon as it's summat out o' the Bible. Why, when I was groom to Lord Charles I knowed a man as give Scripture to 'osses regular. A Psalm-smitin' ole teapot he were; and whenever we'd got a kicker, he used to put his 'ead in at the stable-door and say a hymn. Then he'd go in and get 'old o' the 'oss's ear between his teeth and say texts o' Scripture right into its ear-'ole. I've knowed a gen'l'man give him five pounds for scripturin' a 'oss. Only, don't you let on to the other blokes what I've told you now.

Keep it quiet, Bill, and you be here wi' me when Dr. Scattergood comes back at four o'clock."

"All right," said Bill; "we'll get the *words*—but they won't be no use to *us* when we've got 'em. I've 'eard all about scripturin' 'osses, but you won't ketch me tryin' it on—I can tell yer *that!* You know that saller-faced man as works for Bullivant—'im as limps on his left leg?"

"Do you mean 'im wi' the watery eyes?" asked the other.

"That's 'im. Well, he was takin' some polonies to London, and one on 'em was a bit o' regular hot ginger, and begins buckin' one day in the middle o' the road. There was a chap workin' in a field as sees what was goin' on, and 'e comes up and offers to scripture the pony for a pint o' ale. So he takes the pony's ear in his teeth and scriptures 'im same as that man did as was workin' wi' you at Lord Charles's. '*Genesis and Revelations*,' he says, whispering into the pony's ear; and the pony became as quiet as a lamb. The saller-faced chap 'eard 'im, and says 'e to 'imself, 'I'll remember them words.' So the next time as they had a kicker at Bullivant's, the saller-faced chap thinks 'e'll try 'is 'and at scripturin' 'im. So out he goes for a drop o' whisky, to put a bit o' 'eart into 'im, for between you and me 'e didn't 'alf like his job. Then he goes into the stables and makes a grab at the 'oss's ear.

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But the 'oss catches 'old of his breeches with his teeth and pitches 'im to the back o' the stable in no time. The saller-faced chap, seeing 'imself under the 'oss's 'eels, roars out '*Genesis and Revelations*' just as though 'is 'ouse was on fire. And no sooner had 'e spoken them words than the 'oss let 'im 'ave it red-'ot. Broke 'is thigh in two places, that it did, and kep' 'im in 'orspital three months. And that's 'ow 'e got 'is limp."

"Looks as though it were no use gettin' the right words unless you're the *right sort o' man*," said the other groom.

"That's what does it," answered Bill. "My old dad, as was in the Balaklava Charge, used to say as no man could scripture a 'oss unless he'd been *converted*."

"I reckon that's what 'appened to old Shiny-boots and his Ethelberta. Haven't I always said that he must 'a been a warm 'un in his young days? What about 'im puttin' his money on that 'oss as won the Buddle Stakes? And what about 'im bein' robbed of his winnings just as 'e was gettin' 'ome? He 'adn't got 'is white tie on then, Bill, eh? What state must a man be in when 'e comes 'ome after a race and lets another feller pinch his money out of his inside pocket?"

"Drunk as a lord, no doubt," said Bill; "though to see the old joker now you wouldn't think it."

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Meanwhile Professor Scattergood, after trotting three or four miles down the London Road, had turned into the by-lane that led to the villages of Medbury and Charlton Towers. Up to this point the behavior of Ethelberta had been beyond reproach. But as they turned down the lane a tramp with a wooden leg, who was nursing a fire of sticks in the hedge, some fifty yards ahead, got up and stepped out into the road. For a few moments Ethelberta did not see him, and maintained her swinging trot. Professor Scattergood tightened his grip. The mare went on until the tramp was not more than five paces distant, and then, suddenly noticing his deformity, she planted her fore-feet and stopped dead. Scattergood, nearly unhorsed by the sudden stoppage, was thrown off his guard, and in momentary confusion of mind called out in his rasping voice, "Steady, Meg, steady!"

"*Meg*": the sound stung Ethelberta like the lash of a whip, and in an instant she was off.

Professor Scattergood did not lose his presence of mind. For a moment he tried to check the bolting mare, but feeling her mouth like iron he loosened his rein and let her race. He knew the road for the next five miles was fairly straight, except at one point; there was a long steep hill on this side of Charlton Towers, and he reflected that his mare was certain to be blown before she reached the top. He could keep his seat, and, barring a collision with

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some passing vehicle, the chances were that he would win through. He shouted, indeed, and tried such resources of language as his breathlessness allowed; but Ethelberta was far beyond the reach of endearments, and the race had to be run. So Scattergood sat tight and awaited the issue.

His mind was perfectly clear. It seemed as if his desperate condition had given him a large quiet leisure for introspection. As objects on the road shot by him he noted each one; and, with a curious double consciousness, began watching the flow of his own thoughts. He even wondered at the calmness and lucidity of his mind, and asked himself the reason. "Perhaps it is the imminence of death," he reflected; "but death, now that it has come so near, has no terrors. That is John Hawksbury's cottage. I wonder if his son has returned from India. I must be careful on the bridge. God grant that we don't meet a cart!"

They were nearing a village and Scattergood heard the pealing of bells mingled with the roar of the wind in his ear. As they shot past the church he saw a wedding-party standing aghast in the churchyard. He saw the bride, leaning on the bridegroom's arm. The party had just emerged from the porch, and the look of terror on the bride's face was clearly visible to Scattergood. "Poor girl," he reflected; "she'll take this for a bad omen." He saw men running and heard their shouts. At the

end of the village street a brave lad stood with arms outstretched. "A hero," thought Scattergood; "he will surely be rewarded in the resurrection of the just."

They were out of the village in a flash. A furlong beyond it the road turned sharply at right angles. "She will jump the hedge at that point," thought Scattergood; "I must be ready." Ethelberta swung round the bend with hardly a check; but the rider, ready for that also, still kept his seat. A moment later she leapt over some obstacle in the road which Scattergood, short-sighted as he was, could not see. His spectacles were gone, and the cold wind beating in his eyes had half blinded him. He was losing the sense of his whereabouts, and there were moments when he saw himself as a mere inanimate object held in the grip of the brute force that was pulsing beneath him. "And yet," he reflected, "I am not utterly abandoned after all. I know what is happening; the leaf on the torrent knows nothing. A point for a lecture on Necessity and Freedom—all the difference between the two involved in that single fact! To have one's wits about him and be unafraid—what a power is that to break the ruling of Fate! Nothing save a shock can unhorse me. It is a match between Pure Reason in Scattergood and madness in Ethelberta. Would that it had been so in the old days! But,

please God, I shall beat her this time. Ha! She's giving in!"

They were breasting the two-mile hill on this side of Charlton Towers, and with the rise in the gradient came a slackening of the pace. Ethelberta, with head down, still held the bit between her teeth; but the first rush of her speed was exhausted. Scattergood felt the difference instantly, and marked its gradual increase, promising himself that he would have her in hand before they reached the level ground on the top of the hill. Some distance ahead of him he could dimly see the form of a tall tree. With admirable presence of mind he roughly measured the distance and said to himself: "On passing that tree, but not before, I will tighten the rein, and gradually tighten it until on reaching the summit I shall have completely pulled her up."

They were almost abreast of the tree when a dark-plumaged bird, frightened from its roost, fluttered out of the upper branches and flew with a whirl of wings right athwart the road. At the sight of the black object, flung as it were into her eyes, Ethelberta made a rapid swerve, and, placing her near fore-foot on a rolling stone, plunged forward with her head between her knees. Down she came, almost turning a somersault with the violence of her impetus, and Professor Scattergood, hurled far out of his saddle, fell prone with a terrific shock on the newly metaled road.

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When consciousness at length returned it brought no pain of wounds; but cold pierced him like a knife and a shock of sounds was in his ears. A flood of memories was sweeping over him. Beginning in the distant past, and streaming through the years with incredible rapidity, they terminated abruptly in a vision seen far below him, as though he were a watcher in the skies. He saw a deeply wounded man lying outstretched, as it seemed, on the circumpolar ice, and a horse stood by him like a ministering priest. The horse was warming the man with its breath, and the steam of its body rose high into the frozen air. The consciousness of Scattergood, hovering in a present which had well-nigh become a past, was on the borderland which separates a running experience from a completed fact—vaguely suffering, yet aloof from the sufferer, he seemed to remember as one who long ago endured the bitterness of death. The vision was hardly more than a spectacle, the last link in a long chain of memories, and the past would have claimed it entirely had not the stunning sounds still fettered some fragment of conscious distress in the body of the freezing man.

The din increased, and in great bewilderment of mind he began to seek for its cause. Now it was one thing, now another. "This sound," he thought, "is the grind and roar of colliding ice-floes and the crackle of the Northern Lights." The sounds thus

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identified immediately became something else. They seemed to scatter and retreat, and then, concentrating again, returned as the tolling of an enormous bell. Nearer and nearer it came till the quivering metal lay close against his ear and the iron tongue of the bell smote him like a bludgeon.

A warmth passed over his face and a troubled thought began to disturb him. "I am sleeping through the summer; I must rouse myself before winter comes back." And with a great reluctant effort he opened his eyes.

A scarlet veil hung before them. He tried to thrust it aside with his hands, which seemed to fail him and miss the mark. Succeeding at last, he saw a vast creature standing motionless above him, its hot breath mingling with his, its great eyes, only a handbreadth away, looking with infinite tenderness into his own.

He tried to collect himself, and something in his hand gave him a clue. "This thing," he mused, "is surely my handkerchief. It belongs to John Scattergood. It is one of a dozen his poor drug-sodden wife gave him on Christmas Day. And here, close to me, is Ethelberta. How red her feet are!" And he stared vacantly at a deep gash on Ethelberta's chest, and watched the great gout that was dripping from her knees and forming crimson pools around her hoofs.

The crimson pools were full of mystery; they fas-

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minated and troubled him; they were problems in philosophy he couldn't solve. "Surely," he thought, "I *have* solved them, but forgotten the solution. I have lost the notes of my lecture. Dyed garments from Bozrah—red, red! The color of my doctor's gown—I have trodden the wine-press alone. The color of poppies—drowsy syrups—deadly drugs! The ground-tint of the Universe—a difficult problem! Strange that a friendly Universe should be so red. Gentleman, I am not well to-day—don't laugh at a sick man. The red is quite simple. It only means that someone is hurt. Not I, certainly. Who can it be? Ah, now I see. Poor old girl!" And he feebly reached out his handkerchief, already soaked with his own blood, as though he would staunch the streaming wounds of Ethelberta.

As he did this, the great bell broke out afresh. It fell away into the distance. A second joined it; a third, a fourth, a fifth, until a whole peal was ringing and the air seemed full of music and of summer warmth.

Then Scattergood began to dream his last dream, ineffably content.

He stood by the open door of a church: inside he could see the ringers pulling at the ropes. And Ethelberta, young and happy as himself, was leaning on his arm.

"Sweetheart," she whispered, "let us behave ourselves like rational beings."

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He laughed and would have spoken. But a din of clattering hoofs, which drowned the pealing of the bells, struck him dumb. The swift image of a grey-headed man, riding a maddened horse, shot out of the darkness, passed by, and vanished; and the wedding-party stood aghast.

"Who is yonder rider?" he said, with a great effort, bending over Ethelberta.

"A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," said a soft voice in his ear.

A thousand echoes caught up the words and flung them far abroad. Then thunders awoke behind, and rolled after the echoes like pursuing cavalry. "*A man of sorrows,*" cried the echoes. "*He has come through great tribulations,*" the thunders shouted in reply.

On went the chase, the flying echoes in retreat, the deep-voiced thunder in pursuit. Then Scattergood saw himself swept into the torrent of riders, and it seemed as if the solid frame of things were dissolved into a flight of whispers and a pursuit of shouts. A fugitive secret, that fled with unapproachable speed, was the quarry, and the hunters were billows of sound, and the rhythm of beating hoofs gave the time to their undulations. A tide of joy awoke within the dreamer; he was horsed on the thunder; he was leading the field; he was close on the heels of the game; he was captain of the host to an innumerable

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company of loud-voiced and meaningless things. Then would come expansions, accelerations, and sudden checks. Fissures yawned in front; mountains barred the way; the time was broken, and voices from the rear were calling a halt. But the thunders have the bit between their teeth; they are clearing the chasms; they are leaping over the mountain tops; and clouds of witnesses are shouting "Well done!" The wide heavens fill with the tumult; myriads of eager stars are watching, and great waters are clapping their hands.

"Who is this that leads the chase?" a voice was asking. "Who is that that feels the thunder leap beneath him like a living thing?" "It is I—John Scattergood—it is I!" And ever before him fled the secret; it mocked the chasing squadrons, and the wild winds aided its flight.

And now the pursuer perceived himself pursued. A swarm of troubled thoughts, on winged horses, was overtaking him. They swept by on either side; they forged ahead; they pressed close and jostled him on his rocking seat. There was a shock; the thunder collapsed beneath him, and he fell and fell into bottomless gloom.

Suddenly his fall was stayed. A hand caught him; a presence encircled him, something touched him on the lips, and a voice said, "At last! At last!"

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Professor Scattergood was sitting on the stones, his body bowed forward, his hands feebly clasped round the head of his motionless horse; the breath of life was leaving him, and his heart was almost still. Then the dying flame flickered once more. He opened his eyes, gazing into the darkness like one who sees a long-awaited star. His fingers tightened; he seemed to draw the head of Ethelberta a little nearer his own; and it was as if they two were holding some colloquy of love.

In the twinkling of an eye it was done, and the pallor of death crept over the wounded face. The clasped hands, with the blood-stained handkerchief still between them, slowly relaxed; the glance withered; the arms fell; the head drooped. It rested for a moment on the soft muzzle of the beast; and then, with a quiet breath, the whole body rolled backwards and lay face upward to the stars.

Clouds swept over the sky, the winds were hushed, and the dense darkness of a winter's night fell like a pall over the dead. Not a soul came nigh the spot, and for hours the silence was unbroken by the footfall of any living creature or by the stirring of a withered leaf. And far away in the dead man's home lay an oblivious woman, drenched in the sleep of opium.

It was near midnight when a carrier's cart, drawn by an old horse and lit by a feeble lantern, began

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to climb the silent hill. Weary with the labors of a long day, the carrier sat dozing among the village merchandise. Suddenly he woke with a start: his cart had stopped. Leaning forward, he peered ahead; and the gleam of his lantern fell on the stark figure of a man lying in the middle of the road. A larger mass, dimly outlined, lay immediately beyond. Raising his light a little higher, the carrier saw that the further object was the dead body of a horse.

IX

THE CHEST OF CEDAR¹

I

IN THE central district of a large manufacturing town in the north of England stand two churches, on opposite sides of the street.

One of these churches, that on the south side, has a Palladian front and a gloomy portal. The smoke of the city has deeply engrained itself in the walls, and penetrated to the remotest recesses of the interior. The windows are few and dirty, the light is bad, and the interior, which is vast, smells like a sepulchre. A board on the outside informs those who can read the smoke-blackened letters that the minister is the Reverend Julius Sahara, D. D., and that divine service is held on Sundays at 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M. Also that marriages are "solemnized." The word fits the place. If you wish to begin your wedded life in the depths of gloom, you should have the marriage "solemnized" in Dr. Sahara's church.

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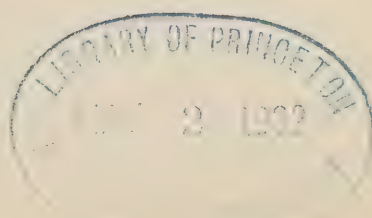
The church on the north side is the opposite in more senses than one. It is aggressively modern and ostentatiously artistic. Its architecture betrays no recognizable tradition, and is not even ecclesiastical. You might take it for a large and handsome private house were it not for the notice-board outside. In substance the information on this board is similar to that on its opposite neighbor, except that it bears, or bore not long ago, the name of another pastor—the Reverend Gabriel Saccarin, also D.D. The lettering is of brilliant gold and glitters in the morning sun. And near by is another board or tablet on which is inscribed a long list of the mighty dead, all of whom, says the legend below, threw in their lot with the enlightened denomination whose members worship within. It was perhaps a fortunate circumstance for Dr. Saccarin and his flock that the great men claimed by the board were beyond the reach of cross-examination.

The contrast in the outward appearance of these two churches was reproduced, at the time this history begins, in the doctrines preached within their walls. I forget at the moment the names of the sects severally represented by the two churches; but I remember that they were known locally as the Saharists and the Saccarists. And I regret to add that the two pastors, who were not on good terms, had worse names for each other. Saccarin called his rival a "Moribundist," which Sahara countered

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by calling Saccarin an "Ad Captandumist." Politeness apart, it must be confessed that these names were not altogether inappropriate. Sahara stood in the tradition of Calvin and had a horror of modern thought. Saccarin, on the other hand, knew of no "thought" except the modern variety, and did not recognize any "thought" as valid which was more than seven years old.

The contrast was further emphasized by the difference in the personalities of the two men. Sahara was old and rigid; Saccarin was young and pliant. Sahara was forbidding; Saccarin had a passion for shaking hands. You never dared to shake hands with Sahara; but when you met Saccarin you seemed to be shaking hands all the time. Yes, even in his sermons the handshaking still went on. They caused you, so to speak, to shake hands all round. They put you on good terms with the universe, with your fellow-men, with the preacher, and, above all, with yourself. Saccarin's voice was like that of a lark singing above the battlefield. He took a cheerful view of everything, saw "progress" everywhere, and took it for granted that each departing soul went immediately to heaven. Not so with the sermons of Sahara. In a voice befitting the Day of Judgment he thundered out the terrors of the Lord, loaded the righteous with filthy rags, lashed the guilty conscience, and pursued the wicked with tempests and flaming swords into the nethermost horrors of the



pit. At a wedding he never failed to make mention of the wrath of God, and would enlarge upon the snares of Satan with appalling faithfulness. At a funeral he would dwell upon corruption and the worm, and I well remember one occasion when Sahara, turning to the group of sorrowful relatives gathered round the grave, plainly told them that the departed soul was reprobate and irrevocably damned.

Sahara's church was well-nigh empty; Saccarin's was full; and the filling of this had resulted, in large measure, from the emptying of that. It was as if two great tanks had been placed side by side and the water of the one drawn off into the other by means of a subterranean pipe. Sahara's income had gradually diminished until he had become as poor as the church-mice who formed the bulk of his congregation. Saccarin was rich; he had an income which would have been acceptable to a Cabinet Minister. Sahara lived in lodgings at thirty shillings a week, board included. Saccarin was building a huge house on a hilltop. Sahara wrote his sermons on the back of letters or money-lenders' circulars, and kept them in a tub. Saccarin wrote his with an expensive typewriter and kept them in a Chest of Cedar, which he had purchased for ninety pounds.

It was a noble Chest, the work of cunning craftsmen in the olden time. It stood upon the feet of lions; a coat of arms was displayed on the lid; a

bishop's mitre was carved at either end; and a group representing Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac covered the front. "The word of God must be worthily housed." A chest to house his sermons; a great mansion to house the chest; and a covering principle for both propositions. Saccarin's conscience was at ease.

II

Dr. Saccarin was "a live man." No fine-spun theories, no obsolete theological dogmas, no antiquated notions of any kind about him. All was up-to-date. His sermons were "right there." They hit modern life, and the latest phase of modern life, in the very bull's-eye. They were discussed on the Exchange and at the political clubs; they were reported verbatim in Monday's paper on the next page to the "Market Intelligence"; and it is authentically related that a great surgeon, in the midst of a capital operation on the brain, paused at a critical moment to remark to his colleague, "I say, Biggar, you ought to come and hear Saccarin. His sermon last Sunday on the Progress of Surgery was the finest utterance I ever heard."

Dr. Saccarin's philosophy, which had a fine note of modernity, may be summarized as follows.

The end for which the world is created is not happiness (an obsolete conception) but—education.

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The universe is best understood by thinking of it as a *university*. The human race is a vast mutual improvement society; the nations of the world are affiliated academies in the Cosmic School; and God is the Supreme Author of the educational code and sole Minister of Instruction—a school-master and not a taskmaster. All events, all objects, all laws, whether of nature or morality, have an educational reference; they are “lessons” in disguise; to find their “lesson” is to find their reason and their final cause.

Saccarin had discovered a new variety of the philosopher’s stone, by means of which he could, at a moment’s notice, transmute any object in the world or any event in daily life into the pure gold of an edifying “lesson.” His discernment of the educational significance of things had the quality of genius. An item of news would furnish him with a theme, a change in the weather would give him a text. If, at ten o’clock on Saturday night, the boys in the street were calling a “late special” of the evening paper, Saccarin would rush out, buy the sheet, turn up the special news—a revolution in Turkey, a prize-fight in Nebraska—and next morning the “lesson” of that event would be served up piping hot to a packed congregation of the most impressionable heads in the city. There was scarcely a great poem in the language, a picture in the National Gallery, or a statue in the public park, which the genius of

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this preacher had not forced to yield a contribution to the educational designs of the universe. Artists would occasionally write to him suggesting their works as appropriate topics of discourse. A young poet in the congregation produced a volume of verse, bearing evident signs of an expectation (which was not disappointed) that Saccarin would preach on the poems. The poems were atrocious but the sermons were admirable. The whole scheme of things, as Saccarin saw it, was acting on the principle of that poet.

The "lessons" were all of the same type. The assassination of the Czar, rightly interpreted, was a proof of the Moral Order; the victory of the local champion illustrated the friendliness of nature. Whatever your first impressions of these things may have been, Saccarin's sermons would bring you round in a trice to a proper frame of mind. Had the malignancy of all the evils in the world been suddenly increased a thousandfold, it would have made no difference. Had the planet exploded under his nose and the whole human race been blown sky-high, leaving him and his congregation intact on some fragment of the débris, it would have been a mere opportunity for the exercise of Saccarin's genius, and next morning would have found him explaining to the crowded pews that it was all right. Unless a planet occasionally exploded, he would have asked, how would the other planets ever learn

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to behave themselves properly? His principles were so elastic that they could be stretched to cover anything; and their elasticity was their strength. Crimes and calamities, plotted treacheries and disastrous mistakes—all were for edification. For this the bird sings, the sunset glows, the butterfly spreads her wings, the gale makes music in the trees; for this the captive moans, the lover sighs, and the murderer whets his knife; for this men perish in the coal-mine, sink in the shipwreck, rot in the slums.

For twenty years Saccarin had been engaged in this occupation, and during that time he had extracted from the universe over seventeen hundred lessons, all new, and all up-to-date. I cannot say that the whole seventeen hundred were in perfect harmony with one another. There were discrepancies. But inasmuch as nobody, not even Saccarin himself, remembered more than a small fraction of the total, the discrepancies were not observed and can hardly be counted as a drawback. The congregation was held together, not by the memory of the lessons already given, but by the expectation of the lessons yet to come. They would have been content to continue for ever on that basis, supported by the comfortable faith that all these "lessons," if thrown into the pot and boiled together, would yield some sort of nutritive broth for the soul.

But, though forgotten, the lessons were not lost. They were carefully preserved in the great Chest

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of Cedar. By virtue of its contents this Chest had acquired in Saccarin's eyes the character of a sacred object. It was his Ark of God, and the scent of the precious wood pervading his study, and steeping his manuscripts, was like the odor of incense to a devotee. Within the six sides of that fragrant tabernaculum lay the Meaning of Things. The Concentrated Extract of the Universe was there. There, unveiled by Saccarin, were the educative purposes of the whole world, and the moral "lesson" of every important event that had happened in twenty years, arranged under heads, expressed in irreproachable English, and plainly stamped in imperishable ink by the most expensive typewriter on the market.

III

On a certain Sunday evening when Saccarin, tired with a hard day's work, was reposing in his big study chair, he suddenly thought that the fragrance of the cedar had lost its freshness, while another and less pleasant odor seemed to be arising from the neighborhood of the Chest. He had preached two sermons that day: the first on the riots in Chicago, the second on a Norwegian waterfall. In both of them he had surpassed himself in eloquence. But the effort had left him exhausted and depressed, and he was in the act of asking himself whether a man who had drawn seventeen hundred lessons from

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the universe may not justly claim a long holiday, when the change in the odor of the Chest arrested his attention and diverted his thoughts.

He crossed the room, opened the Chest, buried his head in the interior; and for some moments his wife, who was seated by the fire, heard him sniffing loudly.

"My dear," he said at length, "I am convinced that a fermentation of gases is going on among the contents of this chest. I believe there is something wrong with the ink of my typewriter. I noticed it gave out a peculiar odor yesterday when I was composing my notes on the Norwegian waterfall. I must send the ink to be analyzed."

Resuming his seat he relapsed into silence. After a time he continued—

"My dear, I'm not easy in my mind. I don't like the odor of the chest. And I'm anxious about myself. I feel that I am coming to the end of my tether. There's a great dearth of edifying matter in the world just now. I believe we are on the eve of a moral famine. I've often thought it might come—a time when the universe shuts off the supply of all the indications which might reveal its educational purpose. If that happens, we shall go to the workhouse."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Saccarin; "you're only tired. There's sure to be something good in to-mor-

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row's paper. And even if there isn't, what does it matter? Preach your old sermons over again."

"They wouldn't be up-to-date," said Saccarin.

"Touch them up a bit, or change the texts."

"H'm—I don't know. Not so easy as you think. And what if fermentation has really begun in the chest? I believe it has. I heard a distinct sound of fizzing when I opened the lid a moment ago. It's just possible that to-morrow morning we shall find the whole seventeen hundred manuscripts reduced to a mass of pulp."

"Rubbish!" cried Mrs. Saccarin. "You need a holiday. We've plenty of money. Why not take a trip to the United States? You'd enjoy it. And you'd get a new stock of lessons. I'm told there's no place like America for providing a live preacher with subjects."

"Yes, America's a great country," said Saccarin, as he rose to go to bed. "I think I'll take the trip. But meanwhile I feel as though something horrible was going to happen. I tell you, I don't like the odor of the chest. It doesn't smell right."

Saccarin's dreams that night were nothing less than awful. He thought he stood beside the Chest and heard the sound of a diabolical fermentation going on within. The interior was boiling like a cauldron and froth was issuing from the joints and from underneath the lid. The froth formed itself into great balls, which grew and grew, and filled the

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house, and poured from the chimneys, and spread into space, until they covered the church and overwhelmed the new mansion on the hill. Finally a huge globe of froth descended just where Saccarin stood and suffocated him. He awoke in agony, to find his head under the bedclothes.

He rose early, and his first act was to examine the Chest. It was all right. He sniffed it all around; the cedar had recovered its fragrance. He stopped the clock on the mantelpiece that he might listen more attentively. The fizzing had subsided. There was no sign of fermentation within.

A moment later Mrs. Saccarin, excited and radiant, rushed into the room with the morning paper in her hand.

"Great news!" she cried; "*Button's Bank has failed!*"

"Glorious!" answered Saccarin, as he snatched the paper from his wife's hands. "Too good to be true! I've been longing for a great bank failure for years. It's the finest subject a man can have—teeming with lessons. Yes, here it is! 'Failure of Button's Bank. Widespread financial ruin.' Why, it gives me a new lease of life! We shall have to enlarge the church again."

"But suppose our leading people are involved in the ruin of the Bank?" said his wife.

"Pooh!" answered the Doctor, "that will make no difference to us. Or if it does, it will be a difference

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on the right side. You wait and see! When the ruined people have heard my sermon next Sunday they'll double their subscriptions. I'll make them! See if I don't."

The good news of the morning was not yet exhausted. Among the letters on the breakfast table was one with an American stamp. Saccarin, whose mind was preoccupied with elation over the bank failure, had read the others without paying much attention to their contents. But when he came to this one he uttered a cry of joy.

It was an invitation to the pastorate of a Fifth Avenue church in New York.

IV

Next Sunday Saccarin preached, morning and evening, on the failure of Button's Bank. An hour before the morning service the church was thronged to the doors. A special force of police was in attendance to manage the crowd at the gates. Hundreds were unable to obtain admittance. Arrangements were rapidly made for holding the evening service in the City Drill Hall, which had an auditorium for four thousand persons.

The evening sermon was the masterpiece. With an eloquence which, people said, recalled his great discourses on the Messina earthquake and the loss of the *Titanic*, Saccarin showed that the failure of

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Button's Bank was a signal triumph in the march of eternal Justice. It was a necessary incident in the progress of the world to the commercial millennium. Without the "lessons" learned from such catastrophes mankind would be unable to find its way to the promised land. A certain number of them was imperatively required by the moral order. No bank failures—no millennium. Such were the terms of the moral order. They were cheap terms. They were reasonable terms. Will you accept them? Or do you reject them? Then you reject the millennium.

The majority of the audience showed by their manner, and by their singing of the last hymn, that they were prepared to accept the terms. Saccarin had conquered. And the Chest of Cedar would duly receive the record of his victory.

One man, however, remained unconverted.

He was a grim Highlander named McTavish, who had lost all his money by the failure of Button's Bank. This man belonged to the remnant of Dr. Sahara's once flourishing Calvinistic flock; but hearing a rumor that the catastrophe would be treated by Saccarin from a metaphysical point of view, he had listened to the advice of a friend and allowed himself for once to join the crowd of "misguided bodies" assembled in the City Drill Hall.

He listened to the sermon without stirring a muscle and without moving his eyes from the preacher's face—a stern figure of stone, carved out of the

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Grampian rock. A close observer, however, might have noticed a gradual darkening in the deep shadows on his face, a tenser line in the firm mouth, and a growing light of battle in the sunken eyes. When the congregation rose to sing the last hymn McTavish remained seated in the same motionless attitude.

As Saccarin, full of the triumph of the sermon, was walking home, somebody touched him on the shoulder. It was McTavish.

"I've been thinking you've given us a grand argument this night, Dr. Saccarin," said he.

"Thank you, Mr. McTavish," said Saccarin.

"But it hasna convinced *me*," said McTavish.

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that."

"Ye see, I've been asking myself a question. Man, I've lost a sight of money. And an auld friend of mine has lost his."

"You have my heartfelt sympathy, Mr. McTavish. But who is the old friend?"

"It's Dr. Sahara. Three hundred pounds o' hard-saved money. A wee bit for the puir body's auld age."

"Very sad; very sad, indeed, Mr. McTavish; but we must bow before the wisdom of the general laws of the universe."

"It's no bowing you'll get from *me* this night, Dr. Saccarin. I'm thinking that Button had a very respectable bank."

"Yes; but honorable men must suffer at times."

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"And I'm thinking, Dr. Saccarin, there are ither banks that are no respectable. There's Hook's."

"I don't quite follow you, Mr. McTavish."

"And I'm thinking that if Providence was as wise as ye mak oot, Hook's Bank would ha' failed instead o' Button's."

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable, Mr. McTavish."

"Ye'll no escape on that, Dr. Saccarin. Ye've been doing your best this night to show us that the ways of Providence are no inscrutable at all. Didna ye tell us what Providence meant by closing the door of Button's Bank? Man, ye're contradicting yourself."

Dr. Saccarin was silent. McTavish went on.

"Ye see, I'm asking a question: *Why Button and not Hook?*"

"I can't answer that, Mr. McTavish."

"Then ye are a man of small intelligence. It's the only question before us this night."

No answer.

"I'm thinking, Dr. Saccarin, that Hook would ha' filled the bill better than Button. Ye may tak your general laws of the universe to hell with ye, along with the rest of your bad doctrine. Ye'll no convince me that a philosophic God maks general laws and leaves the Deil to bring them down on the wrong man. Canna ye see that Button's the wrong man? Canna ye see that it ought to be Hook? I'm

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very much disappointed in ye, Dr. Saccarin. Ye're no the preacher that Sahara is. And I'll wish ye a good night."

V

Saccarin pursued his homeward way, much preoccupied. He had chosen a circuitous route among the byways, wishing to avoid the crowd in the main street and the frequent encounters with people he knew. McTavish's question haunted him. "Why Button rather than Hook?" He could not answer. Presently the question transmuted itself into another form, "*Why Saccarin rather than Sahara?*" and it seemed to him that a mocking voice was bidding him take *that* question for his subject next Sunday. "Your own success and Sahara's failure; your own affluence and Sahara's poverty," the voice was saying; "take that for your subject and draw the lesson." And again the feeling came over him that he was at the end of his tether. Then he remembered the invitation from New York. And swiftly he resolved to accept it and begin afresh on another line.

Had Saccarin followed his usual route by the main street his preoccupation would have been sooner interrupted. He would have seen the crowd streaming in one direction—that of the hillside on which his new residence, just completed, stood out against the

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skyline. Many were running at the top of their speed, or racing on bicycles, and the air was full of shouts. Then a great bell began to ring, and a fire-engine, driven furiously, dashed through the crowd.

Saccarin heard the bell in the by-street, and, turning quickly into the main thoroughfare, looked ahead. The sky in front of him was crimson, and great masses of flame were leaping round the summit of the hill.

A motor stopped at the curb by his side. "Quick, Doctor!" cried a voice. "The suffragettes have fired your new house. Jump in."

One thought only filled Saccarin's mind. A portion of his goods had been moved into the house in the previous week. Among them was the Chest of Cedar.

In a few moments he was on the spot. Leaping from the car he dashed among the firemen and cried in a voice of frenzy, "The cedar chest! the cedar chest! A hundred pounds to any man who will make his way into the study and bring out my cedar chest!"

"We've saved it already," said one of the men. "You'll find it on the top of yonder bank, beyond the reach of the flames."

"Thank God!" cried Saccarin. "The rest doesn't matter. Let it burn."

A moment later you might have seen an interest-

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ing sight. On the top of a high bank overlooking the conflagration, brilliantly lit up by the glare of the flames, was the figure of a man seated alone on a great oblong box. His hat was off, and the high brow of Dr. Saccarin gleamed in the light of the blazing house.

The firemen's efforts were hopeless from the first. An engaging young creature of nineteen, named Audrey, not approving of certain "lessons" drawn by Saccarin from the Woman's Movement, had purchased two-pennyworth of paraffin and tow, and, sneaking into the house when everybody was at church, had set it afire beyond remedy; thereby providing another "lesson" for future Saccarins to ponder.

Saccarin, seated on the Chest of Cedar, from which the heat of the fire was drawing a new fragrance, and feeling beneath him the concentrated essence of the meaning of things, was already meditating that lesson. He had fully risen to the occasion. "Next Sunday," he said to himself, "I will preach a sermon that will shake the city."

Suddenly he was aware of a tall figure standing by his side.

"That's a grand box ye're sitting on," said the voice of McTavish. "Maybe ye'll tak no offense if I sit beside ye."

And McTavish took his place beside the clergyman; and they two sat thus on the Chest.

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Saccarin said nothing, and there was a long silence. The Highlander was the first to speak.

"I'm thinking there's great wealth in the box," said he.

"There is," answered Saccarin.

"Ye did well to save it. Banknotes, without a doot, and good securities—bonds and deeds and siclike."

"No. Wealth of a higher kind. Mr. McTavish, this chest contains seventeen hundred original discoveries of the meaning of things."

"Ech, man, I'm sorry. It's no worth the saving. Dr. Saccarin, your box is full o' trash; and yon lassies that set fire to guid property are the products of your ain bad doctrine. Man, ye'll do well to cast it among the burnings."

"Never!"

"Maybe there's an answer inside the box to the question I've been putting to ye. I'd be glad to see it if there is; I'm thinking we'd better open the box." And then McTavish, as though speaking to himself, repeated the ominous words, "*Why Button and not Hook?*"

I know not what strange influences were at work. But certain it is that the moment these words were pronounced Saccarin heard something go snap inside his skull and the glare of light outside him seemed to transfer itself to his soul and become an

inward illumination. He sprang from his seat and grasped the Highlander's bony hand.

"Mr. McTavish," he cried, "I'm going to New York."

"It's a grand salary ye'll be getting in New York, Dr. Saccarin; and I'm thinking ye'll no want your box any more," said McTavish. "Man, ye'll be well advised to burn this trash before ye go to New York. It's a mass of unco bad doctrine we're sitting on."

"We'll burn it, McTavish; we'll burn it! Help me to carry the chest to the edge of the bank," was Saccarin's reply.

At the foot of the bank and reaching level with its top was a great pile of boards which had been thrown out during the construction of the house. A piece of burning timber had fallen near and smoke was already rising from the heap.

"It's gey heavy," said McTavish, as the two men, at opposite ends, took hold of the rings of the Chest, "but maybe we two can raise it on to the altar of wood."

"Wait a moment," said Saccarin as he dropped his end, "my cheque-book is inside. I keep it with the manuscripts of my sermons."

"It's worth better company," said McTavish. "We'll no burn the cheque-book."

Saccarin searched in his pocket, found a key,

opened the Chest, rescued the cheque-book, and closed the lid.

"Now to the flames!" he cried. "McTavish, it's a sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts."

"The smoke will be like the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah," said the slow, deep voice of the Gael.

The two men, staggering with the burden, deposited the Chest of Cedar on the top of the smouldering pile.

Then they sat on the ground and watched. In a few minutes a tongue of flame was seen to rise from the wood and lick the Chest. Saccarin drew forth his handkerchief and wiped a tear from his cheek.

"Dr. Saccarin, I'm expecting ye to play the man," said McTavish. "Ye're a poor preacher compared with Sahara, and there's little marrow in your gospel. But ye're no a woman, nor a babe, that ye should shed tears o' weakness over burnings in the valley o' Jehoshaphat. See! The fire's got a muckle hold on your box."

It was even so. The concentrated essence of the meaning of things was evaporating in a fervent heat, and the pith of wisdom from the universal university was dissolving into flame and smoke.

Said McTavish, "Dr. Saccarin, I'm thinking there's light enough in yonder flaming fire for a man to see his way to the doing of a good deed."

Saccarin drew a fountain pen from his waistcoat pocket, and presently McTavish saw that the

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cheque-book was on the Doctor's knee and that he was writing.

"Take that," said Saccarin. "Take it to Dr. Sahara. Tell him it is a gift if he will consult my wishes, and a loan if he prefers to stand on his pride."

McTavish took the slip of paper. By the light of the burning Chest he saw that it was a cheque in Sahara's favor for three hundred pounds.

"Dr. Saccarin," he said, "ye're a godly man after your ain lights. *But ye're no sound on the fundamentals.*"

X

“BRACKETED FIRST”¹

THOSE who are familiar with the ways of our University may learn with a gentle surprise that in the one subject which, from its nature, deals with Practice, the highest Degrees are obtainable without any Practical Examination whatsoever. That subject is Moral Science. Are you a candidate for Honors in mathematics? Then produce your instruments and draw an ellipse. In physiology? Decapitate this frog and dissect the brain while we are watching you. In botany? Put these seeds under the microscope and name the family-tree that bore them. In medicine? Go to yonder bedside, feel the patient's pulse and prescribe the dose. In short, show that you can *do* something without making a mess of it—or the Honors shall not be yours. But in Moral Science we have none of these tests. We ask you to identify no specimens, to diagnose no malady, to compound no bolus, to probe no wound, to administer no viaticum to the departing soul. All that, we say, will come after-

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wards; it is not in our province; we teach you not *to do*, but *to think* what you are doing.

The events I am about to relate belong to a period—not so very long ago—when interest in speculative morals was keener in our University than it is to-day. Questions which have since grown stale and become provocative of yawns in the lecture-room were then in the ascendant. It was a time when a change of view concerning the ethical “end” might lead to the rupture of a friendship, when affinities concerning free-will would explain the sudden marriage of a young professor, and when undergraduates would debate the Greatest Happiness till two in the morning. Moral Science was no more practical then than now, but the theoretical enthusiasm was greater, and there was more German blood in our intellectual veins. The spirit of mockery had not yet appeared at the Hegelian council-board; you could quote Lotze without being considered a bore; Schopenhauer was still uneclipsed by Nietzsche; and there was no more sporting event in the academic world than the yearly competition for the Kant Scholarship in Speculative Morals.

In the year when my story begins the competition for this Scholarship was unusually severe. That year, indeed, marks an illustrious date in the annals of Moral Science, as expounded in our University; we still talk of its glories in the Common Room, when we remember the great days of old, over our

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second glass of port. Nineteen candidates were in for the Scholarship; and there was not a feeble one among them. All of them have since won distinction; several, it must be added, have died on the field of battle.

Among the entrants for the Scholarship that year three stood out as the chief favorites. The candidate with the strongest backing was John Danvers, Scholar of St. Rook's.

It is said that the sons of clergymen often turn out ill; we ought not to be surprised, therefore, if the sons of blackguards occasionally turn out well. At all events the father in this case was, or had been, a blackguard, and the son was turning out uncommonly well. Danvers was one of those young men, of whom there are more in the world than one might suspect, who deliberately set themselves the task of atoning before the world for the sins of their fathers. What the particular sin of Danvers' father had been it concerns us not to know; enough that it had brought deep disgrace upon a family of honorable repute. He had disappeared and was reported to be dead; and since he had once been well known to many of us, and had numerous connections by kinship and marriage with members of the University, it was a point of prudence never to mention his name. Once only did John Danvers broach the matter to me. His father's turpitude, he told me, had furnished him with a knowledge of evil that was

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unique, and he was determined to find out a way of applying this knowledge to the service of the world, so that the world in the long-run would become better off through his exertions than it would have been had his father committed no crimes. “There must be a way of doing that,” he said, “and I suspect that it lies in the direction of social service. A man who knows what I know is in an exceptionally strong position for dealing with such and such types of evil; and I am looking to Moral Science to help me in finding a way of turning this knowledge to good account.” This explains why John Danvers, who was one of the blithest boys imaginable, had turned his attention to Moral Science—a point otherwise hard to understand.

I confess I received his confidence on this matter with mingled feelings. For Danvers himself and his motives I felt nothing but admiration; but I knew enough of Moral Science to fear that some disappointment might await him in that quarter. Moral Science, as we cultivated it in those days, was not well adapted to meeting the needs of young men who were bent on atoning for the sins of their fathers. It was, as we have seen, avowedly, and perhaps somewhat pompously, theoretical; whereas John Danvers’ designs in morality leaned to the practical side.

The candidate thought to have the second chance was Tom Pindar, descended from a long line of

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'Varsity Dons. Of him my recollection is less distinct; at least, I remember him rather as a type than as an individual. He had a big body, a firm mouth, and a fine set of teeth; one of those clean-minded, upstanding young Britons of whom, I thank God, you may find a thousand in the University any day. One distinguishing peculiarity, however, I can recall. He had a habit of biting so hard on the mouthpiece of his tobacco-pipe that neither wood, vulcanite, nor amber could resist him. He would often come with Danvers and others to smoke in my rooms, and we used to make small bets on the chance of Tom's mouthpiece lasting out to the end of the ritual. This it seldom did. Tom's manner was to stick his pipe in his mouth whenever he wanted to emphasize the points in his argument, and then, sure as fate, there would be a crash between his jaws, the pipe would fall on the floor, and we had to wait for the rest of the sentence until Tom had finished the process of spitting the splinters of amber into the coal-scuttle. In outward appearance he contradicted all one's notions of the professional moralist: none the less, he had the wisdom of the schools at his finger-ends; he was a great champion of the doctrine of "self-realization," and could trounce a Utilitarian till he made him dance.

The third favorite for the Kant Scholarship was Madeleine Doughty. The third, I mean, with the general public. With me she was the first. Among

the women—and several women always competed for the Kant Scholarship—she was acclaimed the most charming; but a few men backed her on other grounds. She was certainly gifted with intelligence beyond the common; and, the combination of beauty and wit being highly prized in the University, there were not a few among the elder Dons who, whenever they saw Madeleine, had a notion of what they would do if they were twenty years younger.

Like Pindar, Madeleine Doughty lacked the outward seeming of a moral philosopher. What attracted her to this science was never known till the events were fully accomplished which I am about to relate. But I will so far anticipate as to say that Madeleine was distantly connected with Danvers, whom she had known from childhood, and fully cognizant of the circumstances of the family disgrace. And besides this she had managed to penetrate, by means which I shall leave to the imagination of the reader, into the secret of John Danvers' designs in respect of his father's crime. There is something about the idea of making atonement which has a peculiar attraction for noble women; whenever atoning work is afoot, some Magdalen or Cordelia is sure to find it out and take a hand; and, to be more explicit, I believe that Madeleine Doughty had not only found out what Danvers was after, but was secretly preparing herself, in her own way, for participating in the young man's enterprise. She was

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resolute as well as intelligent; and had made up her mind about some things which most girls at her age are content to leave in delightful uncertainty.

It was one of the rules of the examination for the Kant Scholarship that no candidate was allowed to write his name on the papers—they had numbers or pseudonyms, I forget which; but Miss Doughty's handwriting was peculiar, and I can tell you (being in the secret) that when the papers came in, the first thing each of the examiners did was to pick out Madeleine's and stick them at the bottom of the pile, to be reserved as a *bonne bouche* till the last. Not that any of them had hopes for himself—they were all married men and moral philosophers to boot. But they were interested. They knew—everybody knew—that Danvers and Pindar were both desperately in love with Madeleine.

How desperately you may judge from the following incident. On the morning the trial began the janitor received instructions (from a certain person) to interpose opaque pieces of furniture in the examination room along the lines of vision which connected Madeleine with the two men. They put Madeleine behind what was virtually a screen; which proves that, despite their philosophy, the examiners were men of the world and knew all about it.

We had heard also—for a University has some of the properties of a whispering gallery—that Made-

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leine was willing to marry either Danvers or Pindar, and would have given her hand to whichever of the pair had made the first decided move. There was also another story, whose originator, if I remember rightly, was a little coach named Merlin, a man with a clubfoot, whom some of us had observed making eyes through his spectacles at Madeleine. He gave it out that Madeleine had decided to have neither of the young men; that each of them had proposed and been rejected, because Madeleine would not inflict suffering on the other by accepting the one. This story I never believed; it was not in human nature. Besides, its source was tainted and watery. I know as a fact that neither Danvers nor Pindar ever proposed to Madeleine Doughty.

Such were the three favorites for the Kant Scholarship in Speculative Morals. It only remains for me to add that Danvers and Pindar were bosom friends—old schoolfellows, comrades of the football field, and loyal to each other with a loyalty beyond the love of women. They were humble-minded too, as the loyal always are; each unconscious of his own fine qualities, but convinced that the other was just the finest fellow in the world. And thus it was that both of them were hanging back in the affair of Madeleine. It was a strife of mutual self-renunciation. “Go in and win her, Pin!” said the one; “she’s far too good for me.” “Go in and win her, Dan!” said the other; “I’m not nearly good enough

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for her." And the result was that neither of them "went in."

How is it, I have often asked myself, that not one of us wiseacres who were conducting the examination for the Kant Scholarship had the perspicacity to see that here was a golden opportunity for introducing the Practical Test into the teaching of Moral Science, thereby earning immortal honors for our University as the initiator of a great reform? Why, instead of plying them up to the last moment with questions as to the University of Moral Law, which all three answered to equal admiration, did we not put the matter to the touch at the very point where the Particular was thrust under our noses? Just consider what we might have done! After disposing of the other sixteen candidates we might have said to our three young friends: "Go into the next room all three of you and stay there for an hour or less; settle your little affair by the application of Kantian or any other recognized principles of Morality; prove thus your capacity for Moral Decision, and then return. No award to be made until the wedding bells begin to ring." It was strange that none of us thought of this practical test, the opportunity for which had been providentially thrown in our way. As it was, we followed the usual methods, awarding the scholarship, after long debate, to Madeleine Doughty, whose "essay" was extraordi-

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narly brilliant. Its subject, chosen out of four alternatives, was “Courage as the Basis of Morality,” treated in a manner by no means complimentary to Kant. The “essays” of Danvers and Pindar were on “self-sacrifice.” They were distinguished by great knowledge of authorities, extreme subtlety of analysis, and profound deference to Kant; but both ending abruptly, just short of the conclusion, we were compelled to mark them with an “alpha minus.” Never did examiners take more conscientious pains with their business. But I cannot escape an uncomfortable feeling that we might have had something serious to answer for. No thanks to us that things did not go utterly wrong. No thanks to us that Madeleine is not married to Merlin and that Danvers and Pindar did not become monks.

Thus it was, then, that the examiners, acting in their official capacity, lost their chance. But Powers, which have no official status in the University, were at work, and the omission was soon made good. These Powers had a further examination in store for Danvers, Pindar, and Madeleine Doughty; and, needless to say, *their* programme had been drawn up on strictly practical lines.

The practical test came about a year after the award of the Kant Scholarship; and you may take it as incidental witness to the Perversity of Things that this far more difficult examination was launched

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upon our young friends on the very evening when the list of Final Honors in the School of Moral Science was posted in the Senate House—almost at the moment, that is to say, when the three were congratulating one another on having done with Examinations for ever!

Who that has been through the mill needs reminding of that scene? Let the readiest writer describe it and his pen will make blots. Let the soundest sleeper recall it in the night watches and he will lie awake for an hour. We are in the Vestibule of the Senate House. A jabbering crowd of youths and maidens who move distractedly; groups formed and instantly dissolved; dark shadows under eyes that are glittering with excitement or apprehension; cold fingers and damp palms—this is what we see, this is what we feel. There is a nervous tension in the air; the walls are tremulous; the marble flags rock under the feet; voices, high-pitched and jerky, break forth and run about like sudden fractures in a field of ice. All at once the babble ceases: a man in a chocolate uniform and a gold-laced hat is fixing something on the wall; nothing is heard save the sound of hurrying feet and the rustle of women's skirts. The whole crowd has melted into a solid lump of human backs, massed against the wall; it seems to hang upon the notice-board as by a peg. So for half a minute it hangs; then a right-about face in both directions, and the lump has dissolved

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itself into a multiplicity of chattering units. The victors are suppressing their elation; the disappointed are passing it off; the broken are speaking with a smile that turns into a grin; backs are being slapped; consolations are being offered. “Just what we expected,” somebody is saying, “Danvers, Doughty, and Pindar bracketed together at the head of the list.”

That evening, I well remember, was dark, wet and tempestuous. As I walked to the Senate House to learn the result, I noticed a number of woebegone individuals hanging about the neighborhood, men selling bootlaces, women with a basket of flowers on one arm and a baby on the other, and here and there the vendors of more cunning merchandise—an Oriental with a barrow of tortoises, a man with three pet dogs led by a string, a Prima Donna of the streets singing to the accompaniment of a harp. Through some strange leakage of information the begging fraternities are always well posted as to the internal arrangements of our University.

Among the first to come forth from the Senate House was Danvers, his high spirits well under control. As he passed through the swinging door he turned round to shout his thanks to someone who was congratulating him from the throng behind. “A bit of luck,” he added, “just a fluke!” Then he stood for a moment looking at the rain, which was

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coming down in torrents. He heard a fine voice singing, and looking round for the cause he saw the Prima Donna standing beside the harpist under the shelter of a shop-front. They were half-way through *La ci darem*, and the notes seemed to Danvers like an echo of music in his own soul. Then something happened which gave him a shock. A mass of rain-water, which had collected in the awning above the shop-front, suddenly burst through and splashed full on the singer, extinguishing the song; and the Prima Donna, followed by the harpist, bolted into the shop. "Poor devil!" thought Danvers. "That's hard lines! I suppose some people would call it funny. A pretty woman, with a nice frock on, too. I hope the people will be decent to her in the shop. She must be soaked to the skin."

Thinking thus, he was in the act of putting up his umbrella, when a man, clad in a frowsy overcoat, and little else, the rain streaming from his hat, stepped up to him and said: "Beg your pardon, sir, but could you give a poor chap the price of a meal and a bed? I've walked twenty-eight miles to-day, sir, and not had a bite of food since last night."

Danvers' right hand dived into his trousers pocket, and a shilling was already between his fingers when a thought checked the movement. The thought was too fugitive to be quite articulate; like the faint backwash of a receding tide it just broke and rippled over the margin of consciousness. "There's some

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connection,” the thought seemed to be saying, “between Moral Science and the position in which you are suddenly placed by the appeal of this man! What *is* the connection, John Danvers?”

The thought, unformed and swift as it was, caused Danvers to hesitate. Whatever the connection might be, precipitate action was not quite the thing for a man who had just been bracketed first in Moral Science—a man, moreover, who had come within an ace of that bluest of blue ribbons, the Kant Scholarship. He was being taken unawares. One ought to reflect before acting. Otherwise one is a humbug.

Not many days before he had scored heavily on one of the papers in answer to a question which required him to weigh the respective merits of “reflective and unreflective Morality.” He had shown (*maxima cum laude*) that the reflective sort is by far the superior article, supporting his argument by citations from the greatest authorities, including several terse passages of Aristotle, all reproduced in faultlessly accented Greek. Moreover, he had proved to the satisfaction of the examiners that he knew the virtue of Benevolence up and down, from its measly adolescence in pagan ethics to its white-winged maturity under the Christian Law. He had analyzed that virtue into its ultimate constituents; he had described the dunghill on which it was born and the golden palace it inhabits now; nay more, while dissecting the roots whence Benevolence springs, he

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had discovered a root unmentioned in any of the text-books—a sign of originality which the examiners, always hospitable to such discoveries, had been quick to welcome, one of them actually saying to his colleagues that the point was “quite interesting.” Which remark the examiner concluded with a yawn. The poor man had read thirty-seven essays on Benevolence that day.

While these reverberations were shaking his mind, Danvers, I say, hesitated; and the shilling, which had not yet seen the light, slipped from between his fingers and rejoined its comrades at the bottom of his trousers pocket. The tramp, whose hearing for such things was abnormally acute, heard the jingle of the coin, and, correctly interpreting the sound, muttered an unspeakable word under his breath.

“Look here,” said Danvers, “I don’t give money to beggars on the street. You know it’s illegal to ask. You’d get into trouble if the police saw you. You’d better go to the Casual Ward.”

“Thank you, sir,” said the tramp, speaking in a voice which seemed an excellent imitation of the peculiar intonation we acquire, or cultivate, in the University. “I am always attracted by the Casual Ward, sir. It’s a place both of comfort and refinement, and may be compared with the best London clubs. But unfortunately, sir, the Casual Ward is closed at this time of night.”

“Then try the Salvation Army Shelter. You’ll

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find it by going down that street and taking the first to the left. And come round to my rooms to-morrow morning and I'll give you a ticket for the Charity Organization Society and have your case investigated.”

Danvers felt that he would really like to investigate this case.

“Thank you again,” answered the tramp, taking off his hat, and artfully aiming the water that streamed from its brim upon Danvers' boots. “Thank you exceedingly. I was hoping you would say that, sir: in fact, it was only my modesty which prevented my asking for a ticket at the first. I will certainly call upon you to-morrow morning. Will you be kind enough to name the hour and the place?”

“Come round to St. Rook's College at eleven o'clock and ask for Mr. Danvers. I'll tell the porter to show you to my room.”

The man had large, prominent eyes; and he scrutinized Danvers up and down. Then, with the coolest insolence, he extended his dirty palm and said—

“Shake hands, Mr. Danvers. I'm glad to meet you.”

Danvers stepped back a pace. “I like your impudence,” he said. “But you can't play that game with me, so don't try it on! However, come round to-morrow morning, and I'll do as I said.”

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"Punctually at eleven, Mr. Danvers, I shall be at St. Rook's. But may I venture to point out to you, sir, a little fact which has possibly escaped your observation? I think you perceive, sir, that I am very hungry now; but have you reflected that at eleven to-morrow morning I shall be *hungrier still*, and perhaps in a state of exhaustion so extreme as to be unable to take advantage of your wisely deferred benevolence? These things don't stand still, sir."

Danvers turned away; he was bewildered, and had had enough. "This," he thought, "is a begging impostor—one of those rascals who study their parts like actors preparing for the stage. I've heard they rehearse 'em in thieves' kitchens and criticize one another."

But in spite of the worldly wisdom hidden in this thought, Danvers' mind was not at ease. He was not sure of himself. He felt like a man who had just been bathing out of his depth and had a panic, and is now swimming to shore, afraid to face his companions who are laughing at him on the beach. Or it was as if a nasty collision had taken place between things which had no business to be on the same road; as if an Ideal had forsaken the lines laid down for it and had been run into and tragically damaged by a Reality. "What ought I to have done?" he kept asking himself. "Am I an ass?"

I have heard of a drastic Institution where punc-

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tually at six in the morning the Head Physician touches an electric button, and instantly every patient is rolled out of his warm bed into a cold bath. John Danvers had just had a taste of this treatment: from the warm Honors of Moral Science he had been shot straight into the cold water of Moral Fact.

He was now on his way to the Post Office—to send a telegram to his mother and two sisters announcing that he was bracketed first in Moral Science with Pindar and “a girl.” He had resolved to put it in that way.

But the image of the tramp persisted in his memory and troubled him sorely. “What is the matter with me?” he kept asking. “Have I betrayed my principles?”

Before he reached his rooms he had formed a resolution to restate the whole occurrence in terms of Moral Science, judge what he had done in the light of First Principles, and by their means lay down a definite plan of action which would save him from being taken unawares on any future occasion when he might be accosted by a tramp. And incidentally he would make up his mind as to the action he ought to take at eleven o’clock to-morrow morning. He would not be caught napping again by tramps.

Danvers, on arriving at his rooms, composed himself to think. Had he done right or wrong in refus-

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ing the shilling to the tramp? Did it square with his own theory of Benevolence as expounded in the Essay? Did it illustrate that theory? Did it square with, illustrate, confirm or refute any theory whatsoever—Hobbes, Butler, Kant, Mill, Sidgwick, Green? Would any one of them, or all of them together, condemn or approve what he had done? These were his problems.

For a half-hour or more he worried over them, leaning back in his arm-chair and smoking three successive pipes as an aid to reflection. He recalled what the great Authorities had said about Benevolence; he recalled his own theory. Then it was as if the ghosts of all the Moral Philosophers had been summoned into the room, and there they sat, round the table, like a Royal Commission investigating the problem. Volumes of wisdom poured from their lips, but it flowed off into space and seemed to miss the mark. They argued, they wrangled, they disagreed, they could draw up no Report. They talked of Abstract Principles and Concrete Cases; but a point of contact was nowhere to be found between what they were *saying* and what he, John Danvers, had just *done*. The deeper they went the more did his peculiar trouble pass out of their sight. They talked of "the poor" and how "the poor" ought to be treated; of the "problem of poverty" and how it ought to be solved: but all this failed somehow to reach that uncomfortable spot in Danvers' soul

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whence sprang the feeling that he was an ass. *Their* tramps were all in the plural, *his* was in the singular; those were a class, this an individual. Their tramps were all on paper; his was on the Senate House steps. Their tramps were odorless; his was not. Theirs had no eyes; his had,—eyes that looked at you in a very disconcerting way and haunted you afterwards. And—greatest difference of all—*their* tramps gave no trouble; they remained quiet, passive, invisible, while the experts were deciding what to do with them; and they were heard of no more from the moment that wisdom had issued its award. But *his* tramp thrust himself under your nose, tipped water on your boots, answered back with a dash of vinegar in his speech, offered to shake hands, and was coming round at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning to see you again.

Danvers began to walk about the room. “What ought I to have done?” he kept asking. “Ought I to have given the fellow a shilling? I’m dashed if I know. And what ought I to do when he comes round to-morrow morning? I’m dashed if I know. I wish I could consult Madeleine.”

As he said the words Pindar entered the room.

“What’s this you’re dashed if you know and want to consult Madeleine about?” said Pindar.

“A serious affair. I’ve had a nasty experience to-night—a tragic collision, my boy—and the end of it is that I’m haunted by the ghost of a tramp,

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and I'm trying to place him in some kind of intelligible context. And not a common tramp either. A fellow with awful eyes. Looked like a 'Varsity Don dressed up for the part."

"Oh!" said Pindar. "A tramp! Chalk him on the blackboard, old man. I'm interested."

Danvers, with commendable brevity, told his story and sketched the problem he was trying to solve. "And I'm not going to bed," he concluded, "until I've settled the matter. Have I done right or wrong? Help me to thrash it out. Just before you came in I'd got myself tied up in a tangle of most infernal nonsense. Open your mouth, man; discourse and clear the air."

"Wait a bit," answered Pindar, "till we have a full statement of the facts."

"I've given you a full statement."

"No, you haven't. There's more behind—something you don't know. I saw and heard the whole thing on the Senate House steps; and what's more, I saw what happened after you went away. Madeleine is in the play, my boy!"

"Great Scot! you don't say so!" exclaimed Danvers.

"Yes. Listen. As you went down the steps, Madeleine came out of the door. And the tramp accosted her in exactly the same words he had used to you."

"The blackguard!" cried Danvers. "Just fancy

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that dirty brute speaking to *her*! Stinking of whisky, too! He'd try to frighten her! I wish I'd given him in charge!—Well, what did she do?”

“Gave him a shilling like a shot, and then talked to him for five minutes. I didn't hear what she said. But she wasn't frightened a bit.”

“She never is,” said the other. “But, I say—do you think she saw me turn him down?”

“She did.”

“Confusion!” cried Danvers. “But how do you know?”

“Because she spoke of it afterwards. We walked home together. But keep your hair on, Dan. There are more facts to come. I took a hand in the business myself.”

“What did *you* do?”

“What it might have been wiser not to do.”

“Like most things! Can't recognize it at that. Name the action. What was it?”

“I gave the man another shilling—without being asked.”

“You idiot!” cried Danvers. “If the tramp isn't already mad drunk and kicking some woman to death it's no fault of yours and Madeleine's. But why did *you* give him a shilling?”

“Because Madeleine did. Don't be an ass, Dan. You'd have done the same thing yourself, you know you would! And what's more, you'd give a tidy sum to have played my part instead of your own.”

"By Gad, I would!"

"And then repent of it!"

"I don't know: but go on. What happened next?"

"I walked home with Madeleine, as I said. For some time she didn't speak. At last she stopped suddenly, and looking me straight between the eyes asked the very question you asked just now. 'Why did you give the tramp another shilling?' 'Because *you* gave him one,' I answered. 'I detest being imitated,' says she, and looks as fierce as a button. 'Well,' says I, 'I wanted to do the same as you.' And didn't she just flare up when I said that! 'You muffin!' says she, 'it wasn't the *same*! I was the *first* to do it. A thing can't be done for the first time twice over!' 'Madeleine,' says I, 'it's all rot my being bracketed first with you. I ought to have been ploughed.' 'So you ought!' says she, and flounced away without another word, leaving me feeling like an idiot. Dan, there's a spice of the devil in Madeleine."

"You've been a long time finding that out," said Danvers. "But I'll tell you what all this will come to. Madeleine will have neither of us. She'll marry that little Johnny with the club-foot and the spectacles—what's his name?—Merlin. We've both cut a poor figure over this affair, Pin."

"We have," said Pindar, and then added, after a pause, "I wish I had been *ploughed*!"

"What do you mean?"

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“I mean there’s a lot of *pity* in that girl. She’s compassionate, Dan; you could see it when she was talking to the tramp; it’s the keynote of her temperament. I lay three to one that Merlin knocks both of us out with that club-foot of his. I wish we had club-feet. At least I wish *I* had!”

“Yes, it might smooth the way. You are right about pity, though. Do you know the best run either of us ever had with Madeleine was when she knocked us over the Kant Scholarship? She was awfully sorry for us that night, and either of us might have had her for the asking. She as good as told me so. Another time was when I got that sock in the mouth at the ‘Varsity match. ‘Poor old chap!’ says she next day; and I’d have proposed there and then if I hadn’t had three front teeth knocked out, and made such a horrid splutter when I talked. But, dash it, I believe she’d have taken me, splutter and all! However, it’s up with us now! Merlin has the ball! What with all three being bracketed first, and then this tramp mess coming on top of that, we haven’t the ghost of a chance.”

The two men smoked away in silence. Presently Danvers said—

“Pin, I’m going to cut the knot—it’s the only way. My mind’s made up. I resign Madeleine to you! You’re far the better man.”

“And I resign her to you! You’re worth six of me. My mind’s made up too.”

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"There we are again!" said Danvers. "Another deadlock! We get no forrader! And the end of it all will be that that little beast with the club-foot will have her. One of us two must cut the knot. Now, who is it to be?"

Danvers waited for an answer. There was none. Suddenly an inspiration seized him, and he jumped from his chair. "I have it!" he cried. "Eureka! There's only one way out. Pin, my hearty, *we shall have to fight!* The fates have decreed it. We're bracketed first with Madeleine. And I've suddenly seen what the Fates mean by it. They mean that we must *fight* for her!"

Pindar rose, went to the fire, and began poking it with Danvers' walking-stick. Then he became interested in a piece of old china on the mantel-shelf, and turned it upside down to examine the marks. He was evidently deep in thought. At last he said—

"You're right, Dan. We shall have to fight. But we are not going to fight with our fists. We are going to fight with weapons of reason—but gloves off all the same, mind you."

"Precisely what I meant," said Danvers. "How could I mean anything else?"

"Right-ho! we go back to the tramp and his shilling right away. That's the ring. Who was right, you or I, or both, or neither of us? We settle that question before we go to bed. We're a pair of hum-

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bugs if we can't. So here's the bargain. *The man who is proved to have done right shall have Madeleine. The man who is proved to have done wrong shall give her up.*”

“But suppose we don't agree?”

“We ought to agree. If we can't, again I say we are a pair of humbugs, equally unworthy of Madeleine, and Merlin takes up the running!”

“But suppose we do agree, and conclude that *both* of us were right—or wrong?”

“Then, by the powers, we'll toss up a halfpenny, and let the gods decide the issue!”

“It's a sporting proposition right through,” said Danvers eagerly, “and won't it just appeal to Madeleine when she hears about it! She shall know it was your suggestion.”

“No, it was yours!”

“Never mind that. It will appeal to Madeleine anyhow. Only last week she said that next to lawn-tennis conduct is the most sporting thing in life. That's the only trouble with Madeleine! She's never serious about morality. But she's a deuced sight better girl than many who are.”

“And a deuced sight prettier too!” added Pindar.

“She's *fast*, Pin, *fast*, I tell you. No, you block-head, I don't mean fast in *that* sense! Of course not. I mean quick, easy, swift, ambidextrous, and all that—just as she plays lawn-tennis. Cuts in, serves 'em red-hot, and scores a point while the rest

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of us are pulling long faces at one another! Look how she handled that mess of Smithers and Haply! Cut the blackguard Smithers clean out of the show, brought the authorities round, and headed Haply off just as he was going to make an ass of himself—all in one stroke, mind you, and quick as lightning. There's a lot of righteousness in *speed*, Tom Pindar—a lot, take my word for it! I've *seen* it in Madeleine. That's the point that Kant and his Johnnies have missed, though I believe it's in Aristotle, if the text was properly restored. But I'm talking shop. Let's go back to the fight. We'll make a proper duel of it—with moral principles for the weapons, and the cleverest and sweetest girl in England for the prize. Marriage by combat! Splendid! Primitive methods, translated into higher forms: unity of idea amid diversity of ritual—and all that! It will become historic, Pin! It will make us famous, Pin! And we'll be serious. No jokes, and no quarter. No self-renouncing motives. In short, we'll play the game."

"We will," chimed in Pindar. "And what do you say to having a bit on? I suggest a fiver."

"Done. Each man backs himself for five pounds. Stakes on the table right away! And the whole ten pounds to go towards the purchase of Madeleine's engagement ring—which is going to cost at least fifty if the luck turns my way."

"Agreed. That's a great idea. It'll help to make

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a straight fight of it. It'll put the stopper on the self-renouncing business—the thing I'm most afraid of.”

“Same here,” said Danvers, as he placed a little pile of sovereigns on the top of Pindar's bank-note. “But what about an umpire? I say, it's a pity we can't get the tramp. I'd like him to be judge.”

“Bosh!” shouted Pindar. “We want somebody who knows Moral Science. I say, what about Madeleine?”

“Couldn't get her; though she'd enjoy it, and make a ripping good judge too. Only she'd make fun of us—the little demon! And I tell you we are going to have no nonsense about this.”

“No nonsense be the word!” cried the other. “We'll have to do without an umpire. It's going to be a duel at midnight, in a lonely forest, with no seconds, and none save the survivor to tell the tale. And now to business! Up, Guards, and at 'em! Sock 'em, boys! We'll begin as two Greeks and imagine we've just put the case of the tramp before Socrates. And from that we'll gradually work up to a modern point of view.”

At that moment the clock on Danvers' mantel-piece struck ten—and at it they went. I shall not enlighten the reader with the full text of the argument that followed. It was rapid, concentrated, and exhausting. At 10.40 the combatants refreshed themselves with a draught of plain soda and a pinch

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of snuff. This warmed them to their work, and the sword-play became magnificent. Subtle strokes were delivered which split the living hairs as they grew on the combatants' heads. There were moments when it ceased to be a duel and became an orgy—an orgy of fine distinctions, a debauch of profundities. When midnight struck, every authority from Socrates to Nietzsche had been cited; but neither Danvers' shilling nor his friend's could yet claim to have the Moral Order behind it. Towards 1 A.M. there was a set-back. They discovered that the problem of Madeleine had become mixed up with the problem of the tramp. Thereupon the two things had to be disentangled, and this carried them back to a point considerably behind that from which they had started. But nothing could daunt them, and by two o'clock they had recovered most of the lost ground. Then it was proposed that before going further they should review the ground traversed and summarize results. This being accomplished, it appeared that, so far as the argument had gone, the weight of probability was against Pindar. He had acted "weakly"—so they agreed—in following the lead of Madeleine, and "blindly" in supposing he was doing "the same" as she. Nothing equally flagitious had been set down to Danvers' account.

"I admit," said Pindar, "that the argument is going against me, though I still have a fighting chance.

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You scored on ‘the Whole’ and on ‘the Good’; but I shall head you off yet on ‘the Beautiful.’ But give me a breather first. Hand that lemon this way and let’s have another smoke. Meanwhile, I’ll tell you a funny thing, Dan. From the moment I gave the shilling, I’ve felt perfectly comfortable about what I did. And now that the argument is going against me, I feel more comfortable than ever. Even if I am definitely proved in the wrong, as I may be, I shall not feel one bit ashamed of myself.”

“I’ll cap that,” said Danvers. “I’ve felt horribly ashamed of myself from the very first. If I hadn’t felt such a mean beggar, and been so deucedly anxious to argue the feeling away, some of my best points would never have occurred to me. And the more my case has strengthened, the meaner I feel myself to be. I’ve been having a thin time ever since we began. And now I’m getting into a blue funk! If I win I shall never have the pluck to face Madeleine. She’d wither me up!”

“By Jove, Dan,” cried Pindar with a start, “that bears on the case. Man, we’ve forgotten something! *The distinction between Subjective and Objective Right!* We must begin again and revise the whole argument in the light of that distinction.”

“It’s too late; I’m dead tired, and my form’s leaving me,” said Danvers.

Pindar jumped to his feet and pitched the lemon skin into the fire. “Hang it all!” he cried. “Let’s

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toss the halfpenny and have done for ever with the whole blessed thing!"

"It's an awful come-down, considering the place we won in the Exams," interposed Danvers. "The halfpenny's a confession of failure. A confession of monstrous, shameful, asinine failure! But sooner or later we shall come to something of the sort. I foresee we shall; and the sooner the better. But it means two things: first, we're a brace of humbugs; second, Merlin takes the bun."

"Merlin be blowed!" said Pindar. "I'll knock his ugly little head off. Dan,—no more blether! Here's a halfpenny. Best of three! Up she goes! Now then—heads or tails?" And he held out his two hands, palm to palm, under Danvers' nose.

"I won't call—not yet," was the answer. "We're at the Rubicon, old man; and I'm not going to cross till I've had five minutes to gather my moral forces. I may need 'em all. So may you."

"Five minutes and no more," he continued as they resettled themselves in the big arm-chairs. "Look at the clock. Be ready for the moment when I drop the handkerchief. Then out with your halfpenny and toss her up!"

There was deep silence for three minutes, broken only by the hypnotic ticking of the timepiece. Both men were visibly trembling, their eyes glued on the clock face. There was no sign that the moral forces were gathering: both seemed verging towards col-

lapse. As the hand of the clock touched the fourth minute, Pindar, strong man as he was, actually screamed, and was on the point of going into hysterics when Danvers, who had been sitting with his eyes half closed, started to his feet and uttered a loud cry.

“By Heaven,” he shouted, “*there’s Madeleine!*”

“Madeleine?” cried the other in a voice that was still half a scream, “Madeleine! Where? At the door? At the window? What, man! You don’t mean she’s here at this time of night?”

“No, no!” gasped Danvers. “A vision! I’ve seen her! Seen her as plain as I see you standing there! Seen her in her room at St. Cheek’s—with your photograph, and my photograph,—and Merlin’s too, by Gad—on the mantelpiece.”

“Get out! You’re crazy!”

“No, I’m not. It’s a telepathic communication. Not the first either. I’ve seen her, Pin, just as she is this minute. And—man alive!—what do you think she’s doing?”

“Go on! How should I know?”

“*Tossing a halfpenny, my boy!* Tossing a halfpenny, Tom Pindar! Where are we now? Hoo!” Danvers’ voice had become a mere moan of wind.

“And what if Madeleine’s toss doesn’t agree with ours?”

“Then there’ll be the deuce to pay all over again.”

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"And what if Madeleine has had a vision and seen *us* tossing?"

"Then she takes Merlin."

"But what if she was tossing for Merlin?"

"She wasn't. She never once looked at his photograph."

"But what if it's all hallucination?"

"It isn't: it's a fact."

"*What's* a fact? That Madeleine was tossing, or that you thought she was?"

"Pindar, you're an ass."

"Danvers, we're both asses. But never mind, old man. We've both got Firsts: that's the main thing. We ought to have rung off long ago. Let's go to bed. See you to-morrow morning."

For a time no more was said, and Pindar began putting on his overcoat, for the storm still raged outside. As he was passing out of the door, Danvers spoke.

"Wait a second, Pin. What am I to do when the tramp turns up in the morning? I meant to think that out."

Scarcely had Danvers spoken these words when a violent buffet of wind smote the building, blew open the casement and extinguished the candles on the table. An acrid odor, from the smouldering wicks perhaps, filled the room.

"Bah!" said Danvers, as he struck a match, "what's the matter with these candles? The room

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smells like a charnel-house. But, I say, what am I to do about the tramp?”

“A hundred to one he won’t turn up; they never do,” answered the other.

“He’s turning up all the time,” said Danvers. “I can’t keep him out of my mind. There’s something queer about that chap. What do you think he said to me when I turned him down? *‘These things don’t stand still, sir!’*”

“There’s nothing in that,” said Pindar. “So long!” And he went away.

When he was gone Danvers suddenly remembered something, and rushing to the window he popped his head out and called to Pindar, who was now crossing the Quad.

“I say, Pin, what about that ten pounds?”

“Bet’s off, of course,” shouted Pindar. “Keep my stake till to-morrow morning. So long, again!”

Danvers slept ill that night, as one might expect. His dreams were haunted by the tramp, who was sometimes tossing halfpennies for Danvers’ soul. And at every toss he would say, “These things don’t stand still.” Just before waking this dream melted into another. He dreamt that he was being drilled, with a rifle in his hand. And the drill sergeant kept repeating something which Danvers, in waking experience, had heard him say many times: “Remember, genl’men, that in real war you ’ave to fire at a runnin’ targit. And don’t forget that the runnin’

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targit has a gun as well as you. Be prepared for the targit to fire back at you, genl'men, and take cover accordin'. These things don't stand still."

At eleven o'clock next morning Danvers was again in his sitting-room, waiting doubtfully for the tramp. No tramp came. At a quarter past eleven he gave him up, and taking the morning's paper he began to read. In a column headed "Notes and News" his eye was caught by the following paragraph:—

"Shortly after twelve o'clock last night, in High Street, a man was picked up by a policeman in a state of helpless intoxication. Soon after reaching the police station it was seen that the man's condition was serious. The doctor was immediately sent for, but before his arrival death had taken place. The only garments on the body, which was much emaciated, were an old overcoat and pair of trousers. From the contents of his pockets the police are of opinion that the man had seen better days, and they are not without hope that he may be identified. It appears that he was begging last night outside the Senate House, and several persons were seen to give him money. With this he evidently indulged in a drinking-bout, the result of which, in his famished condition, proved fatal."

When Danvers read this paragraph he turned sick at heart. His first clear impulse was to find Pindar and show him the news. He was just about to leave

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the room on this errand, when a step sounded on the stone staircase, and somebody tapped at the door. “Here’s the tramp after all,” thought Danvers; “the dead man must be another.”

The next moment he saw he was mistaken. The person who entered the room was an Inspector of Police.

“Sorry to trouble you, sir,” said the Inspector. “From what we’ve heard it’s thought you can help in identifying a man who died in the cells last night—a tramp who was found drunk in the streets.”

“I’ve just read about it in the paper,” said Danvers. “All I know about the man, if he’s the same, is that he asked me for money in the street, which I refused. From the way he talked he seemed to have had some education.”

“There’s other evidence of that, sir. But what made us think you might know something about him is that *we found your visiting-card in his pocket.*”

“My visiting-card!” exclaimed Danvers. “I gave him no card.”

“He had it, sir. At least he had a card with ‘John Danvers’ on it, and the name of this College in the corner.”

“Impossible!”

“Well, I’ll own it’s strange. It’s a very dirty card, sir, and seems to have been in his pocket a long time. I have it here.”

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"Great God!" cried Danvers, turning as white as a sheet. "Show me the card."

The Inspector produced the card. It was as he said. On a filthy bit of pasteboard was the name "John Danvers," and "St. Rook's College" in the corner. The young man staggered, and the Inspector, thinking he would faint, rushed across the room to support him. Sinking into a chair he covered his face with his hands, rocked his body to and fro, and simply moaned, "Oh, my God!" The Inspector, who was not unprepared, remained silent till Danvers uncovered his face.

"It's a painful thing, sir, no doubt. But I'm afraid you'll have to go through with the identification. Better get it over at once."

"Yes. Come along." Danvers put on his hat. As he walked with the Inspector through the streets the words of the tramp kept ringing in his ears—"These things don't stand still." Presently he said—

"Am I the only witness to this identification?"

"No, sir. There's one more. A Miss Doughty from the Ladies' College."

"Oh, horror! Is that necessary? What has she to do with it? She knows nothing."

"Well, we are not sure. She was seen talking to the man for some time last night, and it's thought he may have told her something which may be useful in evidence. She's one of those who gave him money. A great mistake, sir, to give money to——"

But the Inspector checked himself, and did not finish the sentence.

They came to the police station. Several persons were waiting outside. Danvers looked round to see if Madeleine was among them. She was not there. As he passed through the corridors, he thought, he feared, that he might see her. He did not.

He was taken into the mortuary. There, on the middle of a long table, otherwise unoccupied, was a stretcher, and on the stretcher a human shape outlined under a sheet. There was nothing else in the room.

They placed Danvers in front of the stretcher and removed the sheet. And he stood there, still as any figure cut in stone, gazing at what lay before him.

For several minutes he stood thus. Then, speaking in a calm voice, he said—

“That is the body of my father. He disappeared years ago, and none of us have seen him since—till now. The card was his own. He was once a member of my College. He was—well, never mind what he was.”

He did not break down. He showed no haste to turn away. He was like a man gazing at his image in a mirror. For there before him he saw a face like his own, aged and degraded, but also with marks of unutterable suffering, sternly emphasized and even ennobled by the touch of death.

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"Yes," he said again, "that is my father."

As he repeated these words he trembled for the first time. At the same instant something touched him, and, behold, an arm tightly linked within his own. He felt no surprise. He did not even turn his head to see who it was. He *knew*; and it was as if he felt behind him the shelter of a great rock.

"Come away," said Madeleine. "It is enough!"

Arm-in-arm they two went out. As they walked thus along the crowded streets they passed acquaintances and college friends; saw their smiles and knew what they were saying, thinking. They were unabashed.

For some time neither of them spoke a word. Then they began their first lovers' talk.

"These things don't stand still," said Danvers. Madeleine's answer was to tighten the arm that was linked in his.

"We were both right," she said.

"We are both right *now*," he answered; and again he felt the pressure tighten on his arm.

"It's the one thing in the world that is *infallibly* right," said Madeleine.

"Yes. It's the only way out. Madge, I've learnt more Moral Science in the last half-hour than all the universities in the world could ever teach me."

"You don't call *this* Moral Science?" said Made-

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leine; and she looked up at him with a smile that was half a reproach.

"By God, I do! It's the only sort that leads anywhere."

"Where is it leading you and me?"

"I don't know and don't wish to know. I'm content with the place it has led us to already. But it *leads*, Madge, it *leads*—that's the point."

They fell silent and walked on. You see, both of them had been taught to *think*. Presently Madeleine said—

"Dan, dear boy, you've been in deep waters to-day."

"I have. And so have you."

"Yes; that's the beauty of it."

"*What?*" cried Danvers; and, heedless of the street traffic, he stopped suddenly in the middle of a crossing and looked in Madeleine's face.

"The *beauty* of it," she repeated.

"By Jove! that's just what I was thinking. Madge, this world is going to be a better place than it ever could have been if this awful thing, and all that went before it, had never happened. It's going to be better for both of us."

At that moment the toot of a motor-horn warned them to get out of the way. They didn't hear it.

"It's going to be better for *everybody*," said Madeleine.

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"It ain't going to be better for me," said a voice. "I say, miss, if your young man wants to pop the question, 'adn't you better step on to the side-walk? We don't want no more inquests."

The speaker was the driver of the car whose progress they had arrested. Mechanically they took the hint, and the car passed on.

"Madge," said Danvers, "we're making fools of ourselves."

"All people do, at these times," said Madeleine; "but we are not such big fools as some of them. But I say, Dan, this will *keep*, won't it?"

"Till the end of all things."

"All right; then let's pass on to the next. I'm off to see your mother. I've something to tell her. I tried to save him."

"Beloved, you're a brick! But I go too."

"Of course. We go together. And sharp's the word! Only two hours to train time. Meet me on the platform."

And without another word she was gone.

For some minutes Danvers stood bewildered, and pinched himself to make sure he was not dreaming. Satisfied that he was wide awake, he resolved to go straight to Pindar's rooms and tell him everything.

"That's the most difficult of all," he said to himself. "I wonder how poor old Pin will take it? But it's best to tell him at once."

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Pin took it splendidly. When, after a little beating about the bush, Danvers suddenly announced that he was engaged to Madeleine, Pindar jumped to his feet, thundered his congratulations, and roared with delight. But if you had been in his rooms a few hours afterwards you would have noticed that the mouthpiece of his favorite pipe was bitten clean through. He had a powerful jaw. I have only to add concerning him that he, too, passed the Practical Examination with credit and did not turn monk.

When Danvers reached his rooms a letter lay on the table. It ran as follows:

“EAGLE LODGING-HOUSE,
BECK’S ALLEY.

“MY DEAR SON,—I congratulate you on your First in Moral Science. Accept the blessing of the poor old drunkard who is all that is left of your father.

“You inherit your aptitude for speculative morals from me; you owe me that; and I confess I was a bit cut up when you refused to shake hands. It’s a mere accident that I have fallen to the lowest depths. Had I been able to come round in the morning, I would have set you right on Free-will.

“But it’s too late now. When you get this letter all will be over with me. I shall leave it with the boss to post to-morrow morning.

“Your father’s mind, Jack, is considerably dilapi-

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dated, but retains enough intelligence to see the way out. As to will-power, I am unfortunately dependent on the services of a friend, and I begged enough money outside the Senate House to purchase his help. He lives in a bottle. Be thankful you gave me nothing, but tell Madeleine and Pindar that their money was well bestowed.

"I knew Madeleine at once; but you I did not recognize till you gave your name. The last time I saw you your cheeks were smeared with strawberry jam.

"Thirty-two years ago, to the very day, the list came out on which my own name was conspicuous; and it is true, as I said, that I have walked twenty-eight miles to-day—to assist at your triumph, my boy, which I heard was unexpected, and to recall my own.

"I returned from the River Plate a month ago, having worked my passage in a cattle ship. Tell your mother, and the others whom I have wronged, that during these twelve years I have tasted every humiliation and endured all the torments of the damned. So far as I am concerned, the last act of expiation will be made to-night—in the pool below St. Barnabas' Weir. But go on with the work of atonement, my boy. *And ask Madeleine to help you.* It needs more than the efforts of one person to get a soul like mine out of purgatory. Besides,

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she will counteract the speculative morals, of whose effects I am afraid. Speculative morals, Jack, should not be taken neat—that was my mistake. They require mixing with other things. Mix them with Madeleine. Once more, I bless you both.

“JOHN DANVERS.”

XI

THE SELF-DECEIVERS

SEAWOOD and Franks were the Pylades and Orestes of our philosophical circle. Though attached to one another as men, they were opposed as philosophers. Seawood was a Determinist; Franks was a Libertarian. They were Fellows of the same College, and lived on opposite sides of the Quad.

The relationships of these men to one another, and of each to his own philosophy, are not easy to describe. In attempting to convey a just idea I find myself driven to the employment of mixed metaphors and of analogies that don't run on all-fours. This, however, has some vestige of an excuse. For the Genius of Mixed Metaphor was dominant in the thinking of Seawood and the Spirit of Lame Analogy haunted Franks in his dreams.

Thus the relation of each philosopher to his philosophy may be described as that of a Cossack to his horse, by which I would merely intimate that they frequently rode their theories to death. Again, their philosophies were their professional outfits;

they had acquired them by dint of hard study on their own part, and by the expenditure of much money on the part of their parents, and each philosophy was now producing its owner an income of three or four hundred a year. Both of them were young men; and both were intimately, though diversely, acquainted with the constitution of the universe.

The two philosophers—to use the metaphor of a picturesque critic of their works—held “militant views”; that is to say, I suppose, they meditated pugnaciously, and their very “standpoints” were aggressive. The “views,” indeed, were like quarrelsome dogs, and there was much barking at all times. Thus we are provided with a second figure which enables me to say that the views were given a daily airing. Whenever they met they snarled and bit one another’s tails; and occasionally there was a furious combat. The noise was incredible, though I could never learn that any damage was done to either side.

As to the recognized eminence of our two thinkers, I cannot do better than repeat another metaphor recently used by a writer on the vexed question of “Truth.” “Truth,” said this writer, breaking out into a definition—“Truth is what drips out of the barrel when a Seawood or a Franks puts his head into the bunghole of the universe.” What would happen to the universe if a Seawood or a Franks

withdrew his head from the bunghole was not stated. But enough of metaphor, whether pure or mixed.

Seawood, as the reader may remember, was Organizing Secretary to the famous Determinist Club. The objects of this institution, as stated in the Prospectus, were "to disseminate Determinist literature, to influence legislation on Determinist lines, and to promote the teaching of Determinism in the Elementary Schools." An opposition movement, led by Franks, had, of course, been started; it was called "the Libertarian Alliance," and its objects were "to promote the systematic cultivation of Free-will; to increase the range of alternatives for Church and State; and to introduce the profession of Libertarianism into the Coronation Oath." Both movements were extremely active, and each new development of the one was immediately countered by the other. When, for example, the Club started its "Van Movement to the Country Districts," the Alliance sent other Vans in pursuit, and the controversy between Hume and Kant waxed hot on many a village green.

One day, not long after Franks had published his *magnum opus* on Free-will, I visited him, with a purpose, in his College rooms.

"Franks," I said, "I've read your book, and I want to congratulate you. Your case is unanswerable. There's not a flaw in the argument. You've smashed Determinism once and for all, and hence-

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forth it will be impossible for any logical mind to embrace Determinist opinions."

"I'm delighted to hear it," said Franks. "I knew you'd come round in due time. Indeed, you've been a Libertarian all along without knowing it. And I'm proud to think my work has helped you to discover the fact. Of course, you'll now join the Alliance."

"No," I answered. "That's what I've come to explain. I intend to join the Determinist Club."

"But I thought you said that my book had smashed Determinism."

"There's no flaw in your argument, Franks, but there's a difficulty in its application. And the difficulty, oddly enough, arises from the very conclusiveness of your reasoning."

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," said Franks, speaking in a frigid voice.

I must here explain that Franks had a very low opinion of my abilities as a philosopher. So had Seawood. This was one of the few points on which the two men were agreed. It was a little humiliating to me, and the only consolation I had was that each of them rated the philosophic competence of the other almost as low as he rated mine.

"Let me explain," I said.

"Do so; but pray be serious. And above all, don't argue for argument's sake."

"I'm not going to. I merely want you to under-

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stand why I won't join your Alliance, and why I will join the Determinist Club. The position is this. I've no objection to being a Libertarian by choice; but a Libertarian under compulsion is what I will not be. Now your book is an act of compulsion—of logical compulsion, which is the most ineluctable form of tyranny in the whole world. You leave no loophole of escape. You give one no choice at all. The fact is that unless a protest is made at once your book will extinguish Free-will in the choice of one's opinions on this great question; and since, according to you, a man's general conduct is the direct outcome of those opinions, the book will extinguish Freedom in regard to all morality whatsoever. Therefore, I'm going to make my protest, and I'm going to make it by freely choosing to be a Determinist. Franks, you must admit that a person who freely chooses to be a Determinist is a more consistent Libertarian than one whom Logic coerces into the profession of Free-will."

"I'm not going to admit any such shallow sophistry," said Franks, and a smile of pity played round the corners of his mouth.

"It's not sophistry," I urged, "it's downright deadly earnest. It's the fierce shout of Free-will fighting in the last ditch, and fighting against betrayal. Franks, there's a chance for Free-will only so long as the risk of error attaches to the arguments by which it is supported. But this risk your

work has eliminated. Your proof is conclusive as a proposition in Euclid. If only you had left a flaw in your argument it would have been all right. You ought to have done so. But you haven't. Thanks to your irrefragable logic it has become as impossible to *choose Libertarianism* as it is to choose the conclusion of the *Pons Asinorum*. The only thing that one can now choose in that line is Determinism, and that is what I am going to do, and I do it in the name of Freedom."

"I wonder where you have picked up this nonsense," said Franks. "Perhaps you've been dabbling in the *Will to Believe*. James is no doubt a very able psychologist—but no philosopher. At all events, you must excuse me from going further into the matter to-night. A mass of Alliance letters has just come in, and I must answer them before the mail goes out. Perhaps we shall meet at the Dialectical Congress in St. Petersburg next autumn."

I picked up my hat and departed. Crossing the Quad in the direction of Seawood's staircase I looked back and saw that Franks was watching me from his window. Instantly he disappeared.

Seawood, who regarded me as a bore, consulted his list of engagements the moment I entered the room, and it was only by coming to business at once that I saved him from having to see a pupil in five minutes.

"Seawood," I said, "I wish to join the Determinist

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Club. Here is my entrance fee," and I put two guineas on the table.

He closed his pocket-book and looked up. "My dear fellow," he said, "this is a pleasant surprise indeed. But what on earth can have wrought so sudden a change?"

"Franks' book."

He laughed. "Well," he said, "I thought we should get you some day. I was greatly impressed by that last article of yours. Its latent necessarianism was almost on the surface, and I knew a further step was inevitable. But it's really amusing that Franks should have compelled you to take it. Amusing, but not surprising. Poor old Franks! He's a very able fellow and delightful company, but as a philosopher he's beneath contempt. I was saying to my class only this morning that that book of his in defense of Free-will would make more converts to Determinism than anything that has been written during the last hundred years. Did you ever see such a tissue of rotten argumentation as that book contains from cover to cover?"

"Seawood," I said, "the arguments are not rotten. They're sound. They're convincing, overwhelming, conclusive. Franks has smashed you all to bits, and, logically speaking, you'll never be heard of any more."

"Is this an attempt at brilliant paradox? I should think so, if it were not for these two guineas. Pre-

sumably you are in earnest; but it's hard to believe. What *do* you mean?"

I proceeded to explain myself in much the same terms as I had used to Franks. Before I had done Seawood was again fumbling with his engagement-book.

"We can't accept you on any such terms," he said, with the book half open in his hand. "You must forgive me for being frank; but I'm in a hurry. The whole proposition is perfectly childish. Besides, our Committee would blackball you to a certainty. And there's nothing more to be said about it."

"Don't go yet," I said. "Give me five minutes more. I'm in a real difficulty and want your help. Suppose, now, a man came to you and confessed that he had been forced into Libertarianism against his will by Franks' logic; suppose that he treated his conversion to Libertarianism as a thing he couldn't help, as an instance of rank determination, as an event in the system of natural causation, as inevitable as the fall of a stone—to whose Society ought he to belong, yours or Franks'?"

"To ours undoubtedly," said the other. "We've already admitted some scores of members on that basis. But observe their case is not yours. They put Determinism behind Free-will, you do the opposite. They are Libertarians under Necessity. You are a Determinist by choice."

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"Then," I said, "to whose Society ought I, and such as I, to belong?"

"To Franks'," said Seawood, in a tone of voice that seemed to indicate that the Libertarian Alliance would not be greatly strengthened by my adhesion.

"That settles the matter," I cried, and putting the two guineas into my pocket, I rushed back to Franks. I found him reading a novel, which he laid down with marked reluctance to listen to the account of the changed posture of my philosophical affairs.

"And so you want to join the Libertarian Alliance after all," he said. "Do I understand that your professed adhesion to our principles is an act of free choice?"

"Certainly not," I said. "How can I freely choose your principles after you have proved them to be true and all others to be false?"

"Then what has brought you back?"

"I promised to be ruled by Seawood's opinion," I said, "and he showed me that I belonged by right to your Society."

"Precisely. You now stand convicted out of your own mouth. You make this application not on your own free initiative but on the ruling of another, and that other is—Seawood. A clearer case of heteronomy could not be found. Your position, which was at first an autonomous choice of Determinism, has

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now become a heteronomous acceptance of Free-will. Obviously you belong to Seawood, not to us."

"Franks," I said, "this isn't fair. When I told you that I had been convinced by *your* arguments you said nothing about heteronomy, and were willing enough to accept me. But now that I succumb to an argument of Seawood's you accuse me of Determinism, and turn the heel on me."

"That's another thing altogether," he replied, "and as usual you fail to discriminate. To be convinced of Free-will by Free-will arguments is one thing. To take up Free-will under Determinist guidance is another. This last is your position, and it plainly disqualifies you for our Alliance. As soon as our Committee learnt the facts they would black-ball you to a certainty. You must go back to Seawood."

The full recital of that horrible nightmare shall not be inflicted on the reader. Suffice it to say, that till the small hours of the morning I was tossed like a shuttlecock across the College Quad by the two battledores, Seawood and Franks. At each successive interview I learnt a new lesson in theory and encountered a new difficulty in practice. Seawood, on my second visit, took me thoroughly in hand, and, with Franks' great work open before him, pointed out seven flaws in the Libertarian argument which had previously escaped my observa-

tion. This was an immense relief; it sent me back to Franks, protesting that I was now in a position to freely embrace Free-will, on the ground that Seawood's logic was compulsory, and his own "rotten." Franks replied that to admit me on these terms would involve the Alliance in general, and himself in particular, in a confession of failure so monstrous that the thing was not to be thought of for a moment.

So it went on; so, for aught I know, it might have continued from that hour to this, even as it had continued already for thousands of years. But the spirit of contentiousness gave out through sheer exhaustion, and bad temper lent its aid to end the controversy. I wanted, and still want, to join the Free-will Alliance. But I had made the fatal error of giving *reasons* for that preference, thereby unconsciously proclaiming myself a Determinist. From that day onwards both the Free-will Alliance and the Determinist Club have obstinately refused to have anything to do with me.

Taking them all round, it would be hard to find two more satisfactory specimens of the human race than Seawood and Franks. Physically, mentally, and morally, they were a credit to their parents, to the University, and to the State. Although in the opinion of each the philosophy of the other was

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bound in the long-run to degrade its holder to the level of the Hottentot, this deplorable event was certainly not yet in view; indeed one might say that there wasn't, morally speaking, a pin to choose between them. Neither of them was within measurable distance of the level of the Hottentot, and neither was moving in that direction.

Nevertheless, there was a weakness, and they shared it in common. Both of them were fond of money. Franks loved money because he was rich; Seawood loved it yet more ardently because he was poor. Franks had a private income of £800 a year. Seawood had his professional earnings, and he was educating his younger brother at school. Franks, as we shall see, amused himself with a certain financial hobby which gave him considerable scope for his free-will; and Seawood, who was learning to ride the same hobby, found in this exercise a pleasant relief from the mental strain of demonstrating the universality of the causal nexus.

Franks was no less generous in his use of money than he was fortunate in its acquisition. He helped impecunious undergraduates; took shares in benevolent "Companies" which were certain to pay no interest; and subscribed to any Charity which could show a shadow of excuse for its existence. A more free-handed Libertarian I have never met. About Seawood also there was nothing mean. If he had

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a spare half-crown in his pocket he would give to anybody who was in need. It was this quality, I think, or this combination of qualities, which drew the two men so closely together.

Shortly after the humiliating rejection of my alternate overtures to the Free-will Alliance and the Determinist Club, it happened that I was appointed Treasurer to the Society for Providing Lamé Dogs with Stiles, which was then in desperate need of funds. I had undertaken to canvass for new subscriptions, and naturally, the first person to whom I went was the wealthy Franks. To my surprise I found him greatly depressed, and when I stated the object of my visit he responded with a woeful shake of the head.

"I can give nothing," he said, "for the simple reason that I have nothing to give. A heavy blow has fallen in my financial affairs, and I'm very deeply involved. How far things have gone you may judge from the fact that I have had to borrow money from Seawood. Kindly mention nothing of this outside."

Going away full of conjecture I was presently roused from my meditations by a tap on the shoulder. It was Seawood.

"I've been looking for you," he said. "I'm delighted to hear that you've taken up the cause of the Lamé Dogs. It's a most admirable movement,

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and you are just the man to work it. Put me down for twenty pounds."

Completely taken off my guard by this surprising offer, good manners deserted me, and I blurted out—

"But, Seawood, can you afford it?"

"Oh yes. Be easy in your mind about that. Some money has just come to me from a wholly unexpected quarter." And before I could say another word he turned away and went down the street.

A few days later I learnt that Seawood had taken a large house in the suburbs, that he had bought a motor, and that his long-deferred marriage to a charming girl was to take place next month. There was much perplexity in our circle, and many baseless conjectures were thrown out.

It was my dear old friend Professor Denison who first enlightened me as to the meaning of these things. We were seated one night at dinner, as I have already related, and during an interval when the heavy cloud was lifted that usually hung over Denison's brow he began to ask about his old friends, and in particular about the two philosophers. I gave him some general information and then added—

"But a curious thing has happened in connection with those two men, which none of us can explain. Seawood who, you remember, was always hard up, has suddenly blossomed out into a big house, a

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motor, and a marriage. The wealthy Franks, on the other hand, is apparently stone-broke."

Denison looked significantly at his wife, who responded with a glance that gave him permission to speak.

"I think I can throw some light on that," he said. "It's a very remarkable story." And he waited for the butler to leave the room.

Then he proceeded as follows:—

"You remember that last autumn Seawood and Franks took a trip together to the Mediterranean and the Isles of Greece. For several weeks, I am told, they argued Free-will up and down the shores of the Ægean, until the thing became a nuisance to their fellow-passengers. It was the time of my illness, and my wife and I were staying in Monte Carlo. One day I strolled into the Casino to see the gamblers. Judge of my surprise when, on looking round the faces at the table, I recognised our two philosophers. Both were playing deep, and I could see from their faces that they were in the height of the gambling fever. Seawood had won a huge sum of money; Franks had also won, though to a much smaller amount. The sight gave me a shock, and, as both men were old pupils of mine, I resolved to give them a word of friendly advice. Seawood eluded me, but I caught Franks as he was leaving the Casino. 'Franks,' I said, 'this will lead

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to no good. Leave Monte Carlo at once.' 'Oh,' he answered, 'you needn't be alarmed for me. I have myself under perfect control. I can stop whenever I choose.' 'Choose now,' I said, 'and never put your foot in that place again.' 'I'll think over what you've said,' he replied, and he left me with the feeling that my intervention had offended him.

"I now proceeded to look for Seawood. I found, however, that he was looking for me. We had hardly reached our Hotel when our Determinist friend suddenly burst into our sitting-room. 'Professor Denison,' he said, 'I want you to help me. A power that I can't resist has got possession of my will. I'm a lost man. You've no idea what this gambling mania is. It fascinates, overpowers one. It's like a physical compulsion. If I walk away from the thing, it takes hold of me and turns me round, and I'm back in the Casino before I know what is happening. For God's sake tell me what I'm to do.'

"I was about to reply when my wife came into the room. 'See my husband to-morrow morning,' she said; 'he's under strict orders to avoid excitement at night,' and she led Seawood away before I could get in a word.

"I went to bed deeply troubled about Seawood, as you may imagine. Franks, I thought, might be left to look after himself. But for Seawood, with

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his unfortunate notions about Determinism, I felt sure a catastrophe was in preparation.

"Coming down late next morning I heard, to my relief and to my great surprise, that Seawood had left Monte Carlo, having taken the midnight train to Paris. On inquiring for Franks I learnt he was again at the Casino. And nothing that I could say had the slightest influence upon him. He went on playing until he lost every sovereign he had, and was compelled to borrow money from me to pay his fare home. 'Of course,' he said, 'I have only myself to blame. I know perfectly well that I could have stopped at any moment. But I kept on deferring a decision, which I ought to have made, and knew that I could make, when you first warned me.' Seawood, on the other hand, wrote from Paris: 'It was fortunate for me that after speaking to you that night the horror of my helpless condition completely overpowered the fascination of gambling, and literally drove me out of Monte Carlo.'"

"Denison," I said, "is this story an argument for Determinism?"

"Not in the least. But I shall be much surprised if Seawood does not make it into one. And I have a strong suspicion that Franks also discovered a new argument for Free-will on the same occasion."

"What then is the moral?" I asked.

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"Oh, you must draw your own moral. My part is merely that of the psychological observer. And what I observe is this: Seawood's conviction that he was helpless is precisely what helped him to break free. Frank's conviction that he was free, on the other hand, is precisely what led him deeper into the toils."

"Well," I said, "if that's not an argument for Determinism there never was one."

"Of course there never was; nor for Free-will, neither. The whole controversy is a mere dispute as to the meaning of metaphors. But it's a fortunate thing that Mrs. Denison cut short my interview with Seawood. For if I had convinced him, as I should have tried to do, that his helplessness was a delusion, and that he was able to leave Monte Carlo that very night, it's certain that he would have stayed on with Franks until the pair of them had been cleaned out."

"How can you be sure of that?" I asked. Denison did not reply, and there was silence for some minutes. At last he said—

"Can you tell me in what precise points the principles of the Libertarian Alliance differ from the principles of the Determinist Club?"

"I am quite unable to do so," I said—and bitter memories came to mind. "It seems to me," I went on, "that if the argument for Free-will were *quite* conclusive, it would make Determinists of us

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all. Whereas if the logic of Determinism were to triumph, we should all be compelled to embrace Free-will."

"My good friend," said Denison, "are you quite sure that you have not mistaken your calling?"

XII

MADE OUT OF NOTHING

PETER RODRIGHT was the senior partner in the firm of Rodright & Co., Limited. His seniority was absolute, for the firm was Peter and Peter was the firm, the "Co." and the "Limited" being mere concessions to the fitness of things. The Many, if it ever existed, had been absorbed into the One, and that One was Peter. Moreover, he was a monopolist.

His monopoly was the manufacture and export of idols, and he lived in a versatile city where such things are possible. He was enormously rich and consistently hilarious, beautifully tender-hearted, and exceedingly vulgar.

He divided his time between singing, whistling, laughing, and thinking, and not infrequently he allowed these occupations to overlap. Hymn tunes were his favourite music, and these he would sing to verses of his own composition, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" being the tune most frequently rendered. Had you heard the words you would have concluded that Peter was an original old gentleman.

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He was a profound thinker, at all events; and his business was on a scale, and of a complexity, which revealed the operation of a master-mind. He was none of your mean and grovelling money-grabbers who exploit the ideas of men abler than themselves; he bought no man's patent; he borrowed no man's inventions; he stole no man's brains; but, ceasing to whistle, laugh, or sing, he retired with a grave face into an inner office and waited on his Muse until the great ideas were born. "Some men," he said, "put what they make under their waistcoats; I put it under my 'at."

Peter cultivated the thinking faculty. Indeed, he kept himself in training for thought, and his brains were always in the pink of condition. His manner of life was austere, almost ascetic. He ate sparingly and took vigorous exercise; till the last year of his life he enjoyed perfect health. His breakfast beverage was milk and water; he drank no alcohol, of course; he smoked no tobacco. "Catch me mud-dlin' my 'ead with them things!" he said. "Not me! What's at the back o' my business? *Thinkin'*. What makes money in *all* business? *Thinkin'*. What's the matter with all them fellers?"—here Peter pointed to the list of bankrupts in the morning's *Times*—"they can't *think*! Misfortunes—rot! —That's a word as I learnt from that young shaver o' mine at Eaton—though there's not much he can teach *me*, I can tell you.—There never was a busi-

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ness that couldn't be pulled through wi' thinkin'. Look here! I'd bet two to one—though I'm not a betting man—that more than half them bankrupts are smokers. Smokin'! Pshaw! I'll tell you what smokin' does for a man. *It shortens his 'ead!* Breaks business up into jumpy bits. Spoils all the long shots.

"There was a German chap come into my office last year—same line o' business as me. He'd got a scheme for me and him to work the Congo together—a sort o' 'delimitation of the sphere of influence' arrangement. Well, we hadn't been talkin' two minutes when he pulls out a big cigar. As soon as I smelt the smoke I says to myself, 'All right, Mr German. Your sphere o' influence'll get its goose cooked before you're much older.' And I knocked him out o' the Congo market in six months—easy as wink!

"Yes, sir, *thinkin's* what does it! Look at my business. Why nobody'd ever suppose as there could *be* such a business. That's because they don't *think*. I've *made* my business wi' thinkin'—made it out o' nothing at all. Don't you tell me as the world was never made out o' nothing! I've read all about that. I read a lot more than many men as had better eddication nor me. *Of course* it was made out o' nothing—same as my business was—what else was there to make it out of? And what made it? *Thinkin'*, my boy."

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Which observation concluded, Mr Rodright would presently hum a few bars of Greenland's Icy Mountains.

Rodright's goods are to be found in all countries of the world both savage and civilised, the only place where you cannot obtain them being the city where they are manufactured. Observe those three innocent little dots at the foot of the exquisite bronze Buddha which you purchased for twenty pounds from that unimpeachable dealer in Yokohama. They are the trademark of Rodright & Co., Limited, and may be taken to mean that the price of production was half a crown. Or turn to that beautiful old grandfather clock in the Sheraton case, the envy of all your friends as they hang their fur coats in your vestibule; recall the reluctance of the old cottager to part with his heirloom, and the tears he shed, and the shame you felt, as you handed him seven five-pound notes; and then take a strong magnifying-glass and look for three minute dots in the lower left-hand corner of the clock face. You will find them. Or take the set of silver buttons which aroused your cupidity as they gleamed on the waistcoat of the peasant who rowed you across the Norwegian Fjord. Was it not something of a Vandalism to bribe the old fellow to cut them off; and was it altogether fair to conceal from him that they were precious Danish coins of the seventeenth century? But never mind; they now adorn your wife's evening

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dress; and there are three dots on the edge of every one of them.

As to Rodright's idols, which were the mainstay of the business, tell me, if you can, of any country where they are not worshipped. They hang round the neck of the Eskimo as he spears the seal; they tower to a height of thirty feet in the village of Alaskan Indians; incense is burnt before them on the quarter-decks of Chinese junks; the Australian savage has one in his mouth; in the forests of the Congo, in the farthest Isles of the South Sea, thousands of human beings are at this moment flat on their bellies before Rodright's works. "Wherever Bass's beer can go, I can foller," said the Head of the Firm. No potentate of modern times has had a wider sphere of influence. Even science is not exempt from his sway. For Rodright's idols have been discovered in Egypt and in Mexico, buried under the detritus of ages; they repose under glass in many University museums; anthropologists study them, and courses of lectures are delivered in their honour.

But let no one be alarmed. "I've played the game fair and straight from the first," said Peter. "My goods are true to sample, and don't you forget it. They're *correct*. If you can prove to *me* that them bronze Buddhas has got a wrong line in 'em, I'll have the mould broke up to-morrow, though it cost me a thousand pounds to

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get another. Here, take that Greek coin and put it under the microscope. It's real gold, isn't it? Well, *that's* all right. Now look at the shape of that king's nose—it's Alexander, isn't it?—no, it's one of the Seleucidæ—Oh yes, I know all about them—good lookin' fellers too! Now then for the original—here—put it under the microscope—got that nose to a T, hasn't he? Well, what more do you want? What do you think I pay the man as makes them dies? Nine hundred a year, my boy, and don't you forget it. He's a Hitalian. There isn't another man in Europe as can touch him: no, nor in America neither, though they've got some pretty smart 'uns over there.

"Same wi' my clocks. I'll defy you to find a clock as we've ever turned out wi' two styles mixed up in it—and makers' styles at that. And tip-top works in 'em too. I tell you it's a straight game, all through. You buy one of my Sheratons, and you can bet your bottom dollar it's a Sheraton you've got. And what's more—it'll keep time.

"There's a lot o' hanky-panky in the idol trade; but our firm never got mixed up with it—and isn't going to be, neither. Now take Liberia. There isn't a firm in Europe except ours as can get their goods up-country into the Hinterland. Why? Because the Liberians know we're *straight*. Our three dots on a case o' goods is the hallmark o' purity. What's wrong with the others? Well, I'll tell you.

"You remember that smoking German as I told you I did a down on. Well, he let on to me as he'd got a cargo o' goods on the West Coast—and *something inside 'em to make 'em work*. Then he told me as how the Liberian Government had turned awkward and wouldn't let him land his goods. So he wanted to sell the lot to me and cable his skipper to take the stuff to the Congo under our name. After a bit we come to an agreement. He was to send his skipper to port and I was to instruct our agent to buy the goods, if satisfied on inspection with the quality for the Congo market. The minute he left the office—Pflug was his name—I cables to our agent on the Coast—'Inspect Pflug's cargo and report; suspect contraband.' Next day comes our agent's reply: '*Cargo crooked; bottle o' gin inside every god*: have informed Government.' Result was that as soon as Pflug's skipper came to port the Congo boarded him, opened his cases, tapped his gods, and cancelled his licence to trade there and then. And from that day to this I've had the Congo market all to myself."

I have said that Peter was enormously rich, and I have now to add that his public munificence was commensurate with his wealth. To describe his giving as "princely" would be to credit princes with more liberality than they usually possess. "'Ow much has the Dook given?" he would say to the Finance Committee. "One thousand? Then put

me down for ten. And if you keep my name out of it I'll give you another ten in two years' time." Education stood first among the public causes to which he gave support; and he laid down the stern condition that it must be "up-to-date." He was well versed in the literature of this subject, and studied the official reports of what other countries were doing. The lines on which more than one modern University has been founded were virtually dictated by Rodright—and posterity will have no cause to regret it. He was also actively interested in the Housing of the Poor, and bought up slum areas, which he promptly cleared and covered with model dwellings.

But the strangest thing of all was his generosity to Foreign Missions. Look at the subscription list of any of these enterprises, and if you see a large sum standing opposite the word "Anon" the chances are that Rodright was the benefactor. It would sometimes happen that the Directors of the Mission, on learning the source of these anonymous offerings, would evince considerable reluctance to receive them. But a theory was started to the effect that Rodright was yielding to the prick of conscience and seeking to make some atonement for his sins. On the strength of that theory the gifts were allowed to pass; but I have my doubts whether the theory was true. At all events it was not the account which Rodright himself gave of the matter.

“Missions!” he said; “why, of course I support ’em. They’re my Intelligence Department. Look at that map.” He pointed to a big map, hanging on the wall of his office, on which the Christianised portion of the world’s surface was painted red and the idolatrous portions black. The great ethnic religions were represented by other colours—green for Mohammedanism, yellow for Buddhism. “Our travellers work the Black and the Yellow. Never made a cent on the Green since I started business—at least not in idols. Then look at them books.” A row of shelves stood by the wall. On the upper was a comprehensive collection of works on Anthropology and the History of Primitive Religions; on the lower were scores of Annual Reports of Missionary Societies. “We’ve got hundreds of designs out o’ them books. And that Missionary Exhibition was a little gold-mine to my trade. I sent the whole of our drawin’ staff to make sketches. Why, there was a Missionary Meetin’ in the Town ’All last month, and I’d ’eard as a collection of idols was to be shown. Me and our ’ead designer was there, of course; we always go to them things. Most of what the Missionary showed was no good; big sprawlin’ things as you couldn’t ship; but there was one little feller as was a real beauty—no bigger than the palm o’ your hand. ‘Sketch him, Tom,’ I says to our designer; ‘there’s money in that one.’ And we’re sending eight gross to Korea next week.

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“There’s some folks,” he went on, “as don’t believe in Foreign Missions. Well, I *do* believe in ’em. What’s the matter with ’em is that they’re not up-to-date. If we conducted our business as they do theirs, we’d be up the spout next week. They don’t study the markets. They don’t send out the right sort o’ goods. They don’t work together. They don’t *think*. But they’ll come all right in time. No, sir, if people say as I’m against Missions, they’re wrong. I’ve studied savage countries—yes, and I’ve travelled in ’em too; and I tell you that if all the black places were painted Red to-morrow nobody’d be gladder than me—though I’ve a great respect for the Green and I’m not afraid of the Yellow. Injure our business? Not it! Our big profits are not made on the Black; they’re made on the Yellow and the Red, and them colours are safe enough. There’s more profit on a dozen bronze Buddhas than on half a shipful of them things we send to the West Coast. Besides, do you think we’ve not learnt to adapt ourselves to circumstances?

“And I’ll tell you another thing. Our firm’s doin’ more to show up idolatry than all the missionaries put together. You don’t see it? Well, think it out and you’ll see it right enough. You just go and talk to one of our travellers and he’ll tell you why.

“And then what about the curio market? We’ve got a motto in our business—‘The more Christians, the more curios.’ When idols go down curios go up

—that's a law of the trade. Take them bronze Buddhas again; or, better still, the Old Ivories. We couldn't sell 'em to the heathen for more than five or six shillings apiece; and we're sellin' 'em to Christians to-day at anything from ten pound up. No, sir, we've not made the mistake of puttin' all our eggs in one basket."

This last remark was eminently true. Rodright's business was a miracle of difference in unity. His Prehistoric Man Department did a roaring trade in flint implements, Peruvian grave pottery, dolichocephalic skulls, and such like. There was also an Egyptian Tombs Department, which was equipped with a costly plant for the manufacture of mummies and all needful accessories. In this connection it was rumoured that Rodright procured his raw material from a firm in San Francisco, which did a large trade with the Chinese population in desiccating the bodies of deceased relatives prior to shipment for burial in China. Many of these desiccated Chinamen, so it was said, found their way into Rodright's factory, where they were correctly treated, according to a standard treatise on Egyptian Embalming, and subsequently put on the market with three dots in the corner of the left eye. However this may be, Rodright was prepared to supply the purchaser, whether scientific or amateur, with an entire tomb, completely decorated in any style, and furnished with sarcophagus, mummy, or skeleton

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(of man and dog), rusted weapons, drinking bowls, ornaments, and all the paraphernalia of the dead, according to the age and country in demand. As we have seen, he was also remarkably successful in the production of ancient coins. Aided by a staff of skilled metallurgists, microscopists, and designers, he had brought this industry to perfection, and had practically extinguished foreign competition, in spite of Free Trade, by the sheer excellence of his goods. "As good as the originals; and, if anything, better," was his own description of these wares.

His last and perhaps his boldest stroke, which he did not live to complete, was what he called "a new line in Buried Treasure." He had recently produced some Spanish pieces-of-eight, which had deceived the very elect. One day, being at the sea-side, he was watching the destruction of an ancient pier which in old time had been used by vessels sailing to Ireland and had now become an obstacle to the navigation of an important channel. An immense baulk of timber, covered with sea-shell and shaggy with weed, was in process of being lifted and swung ashore by a crane. For a moment the mass hung motionless in mid-air at the end of the chain; and Rodright, who was thinking about Spanish pieces-of-eight, saw it absent-mindedly. Suddenly he fancied that he heard the beam calling to him by name. "Rod, Rod," it seemed to say—"Rod, Rod, wake up; you're losing a chance."

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Now Rodright, as became a maker of idols, was a reader of the poets, and Tennyson was his favourite. That very morning the old man, seated on the sands under the shade of a big umbrella, had been listening to *Ulysses*, excellently read by his gifted daughter. What wonder then that the beam, after its first familiar appeal, should take upon itself to indulge in a quotation? Quite distinctly, as it seemed to Rodright, came the words—

“Something ere the end,
Some work of noble note may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.”

Hereupon the beam, which up to this moment had been evenly balanced at the end of the chain, dipped profoundly towards Rodright, as though it were making a bow; and the old man instinctively raised his hat in response. Then the donkey-engine snorted and the beam, recovering its equilibrium, was swung ashore.

Instantly Rodright felt himself smitten through with the power of a great inspiration. He dashed from the beach as fast as his failing old legs could carry him; called a taxi-cab from the rank; pushed his expostulating daughter into the vehicle; drove to the offices of Mr Smith, Agent to Lord Blank—the owner of the pier; and there and then purchased the whole mass of rotten timbers at a fancy price.

The vision with which Rodright had been thus suddenly, almost miraculously, inspired was that of

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a wrecked Spanish Galleon at the bottom of the sea. Such a wreck it was now the mission of his firm to construct, and the timbers of the ancient pier were to be used for the purpose. The wreck was to be sunk in a likely place ("I know the exact spot, my boy," he would say); plant for the manufacture of corroded shot and cannon was to be laid down; these were to sink the timbers in the first instance, and constitute a preliminary "find" in the second; a few tons of pieces-of-eight were to be buried at a proper depth in the sea silt; and the whole scientifically discovered by experts after a proper interval had been allowed for working up the evidence, constructing ancient maps, and whetting the appetite of the public. Rodright confessed to his confederates that this was by far the most difficult undertaking of his long and arduous life; he was heard more than once to utter the wish that he was twenty years younger; his rendering of Greenland's Icy Mountains became noticeably flat; and there was something forced in his voice as he repeated his wonted confession of faith that "*thinking* would pull it through." "Them sea-changes," he added, "are plaguey things to reproduce. But our 'ead chemist has never been beaten yet."

When a man dies at the age of eighty-three it is perhaps incorrect to say that anything has killed him. But there is reason to suspect that "the new line in Buried Treasure" gave the finishing blow to

Old Rod. His last audible words were, "Sink her by the stern, Tommy, and don't blow her up till she's well settled."

Of Rodright's views on Church and State I shall content myself by giving an indication, or rather a sample. He was a Tory in politics; but his views were based less on the conviction that his own party was right than on contempt for the policies of his opponents. "Them Radicals," he would say, "don't know how to play their own game. Look at all this 'ere Radical Finance. Taxin' the rich! Why, there's no such thing. You can't tax the *rich*. Me and another big-pocketty man was talkin' it over in the Club last night. 'Rod,' he says to me, 'how much is your sovereign worth since the last Budget?' 'Fifteen bob at most,' I says. 'Well,' he says, 'does it 'urt you?' 'Not a bit,' I says, 'the smaller they makes my sovereign, the more sovereigns I makes—that's all.' 'Same 'ere,' says he.

"Why, doesn't it stand to sense that for every one the Radicals hits us we can hit 'em two. Tax us to maintain the Navy? And where would my trade be if we hadn't got a fleet in the China Seas? Why, the Germans would get it to-morrow. Tax us for eddication? And what would *we* do if we couldn't get eddicated 'ands? No Board Schools, no business. Who's afraid of socialism? Let 'em socialise everything they can get 'old of, and thinkin' men like me—men with seven-and-a-quarter 'ats,

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and all the width in front, mind you—'ll get round the Socialists before they've had their breakfasts. Who's going to stop us makin' money? Not—(and here he named a reigning Chancellor). He can tax till he's out of breath for all I care—and I'll get home half an hour before he does every time. Them fellers are no good at the long shot; and it's the long shot that makes money—and keeps it. There never was a tax since the world began as didn't work out in the long-run for the benefit of the rich. It's the men as can't hold on as get 'ard 'it. Them as can, that's the rich, come out on top every time. Taxation ruins the middle classes and gives the rich a chance to buy 'em up at a knock-out price. It's the middling people and the poor I'm sorry for, not the rich. Nobody's helped the poor more than I have. No, I'm not going to *pretend*. I know all about the Publican and the Pharisee, *but you won't catch me pretending I'm the Publican!* I give a lot o' money away and I don't care who knows it—no, nor who doesn't know it. But I don't give none to politics, no, not even to my own side. There's better ways of doin' good nor that.

“Ever 'eard what I did after the Radical Budget of 18—? It looked at first as though that Budget was going to 'it the likes o' me pretty 'ard. But what did I do? The very day as it come out I began *thinking*, and before the year was done we

were goin' strong in old ivories—things we'd never touched before. I made eight thou' out of old ivories in the next twelve months. And now listen to a curious thing. It happened—though I didn't know it at the time—as the Chancellor of the Exchequer was a great collector of old ivories. Well, last year I was stayin' in the country, and a friend of mine took me to see the Chancellor's big show house. The housekeeper took us round, and one of the first things she showed us was Sir Robert's collection of old ivories—standin' in the hall. I'd got my glass out in a twinklin'—and blest if there wasn't our three dots on more than half of 'em! They must have cost him thousands of pounds. Now just you do a bit o' thinkin' and that'll show you how men like me can get home before the Chancellor of the Exchequer does."

On the question of International Trade Mr Rod-right held certain theories which, so far as I know, have not yet been mentioned in the Parliamentary Debates on Tariff Reform. He was by no means willing to admit the principle that each country should be left undisturbed to follow the line of manufacture indicated by its natural aptitudes. He was even known to maintain, on occasion, that the precise opposite was the truth; though a critic might say that, in supporting this extreme view, he was too fond of quoting his own business as an illustration. The general heresy, indeed, can hardly be claimed

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as original to Rodright; but the particular application of it was all his own, and took a turn equally unwelcome to the advocates both of Free Trade and of Tariff Reform. "If you want to make *easy* money," he would say, "export your goods *to the countries where they're made*. You don't believe in sending coals to Newcastle? Why, Newcastle's just the place to send 'em to. Where else will they find as ready a market? Where else will they fetch as good a price?"

Certainly no one could accuse Rodright of inconsistency with these principles. He supplied Venice with glass, Limoges with fine pottery, Japan with lacquer—all of the best. His detractors were wont to say that he furnished gold-dust to mining companies having concessions in West Africa. I do not believe this part of the story; rascality of that kind was not in the line of Rodright's operations, and the proposal, if ever made (as it may well have been), would certainly have involved the proposer in consequences similar to those which befell the unfortunate Pflug.

The one gloomy spot in Rodright's otherwise radiant existence—and it was a pretty large spot—was to be found among his domestic relationships. Mrs Rodright was precisely the silliest of women. She talked incessantly, and she talked nonsense. She was ostentatious and gullible, qualities from which her husband, with all his faults, was entirely

free. For many years she had been an ardent spiritualist, and had connections with the lowest and most disreputable class of mediums, who reaped a rich harvest from her credulity. To Rodright she was a veritable burden; her chatter was a constant thorn in his flesh, uncomplainingly borne; and the frauds of which she was the victim annoyed him still more.

She bore her husband six children—three sons and three daughters. The Christian names of the sons were respectively Livingstone, Schliemann, and Pitt-Rivers; of the daughters, Ann, Jane and Sarah. By a not infrequent trick of Fate the daughters inherited their father's ability, and the sons their mother's want of it. The two elder daughters were in the business: Ann was head of the Old Lace Department; Jane was in the Drawing Office. Sarah was a musician, and the constant companion of her father in his leisure hours. She played Mozart with exquisite taste—Mozart, who, in Rodright's estimation, stood highest among all the great composers of the world. "There's no humbug in him, no sham," said the old man. "His music's like my goods—true to sample. Here, Sarah, my dear, play us that Concerto in D, there's a good gel."

The sons were a constant source of shame to the father, not so much because they were vicious as because they were stupid. "I'd forgive a bit o' wickedness," he said, "if only they were not such

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fools—and lazy fools at that.” Contrary to his general theory of education he had sent the boys to Public Schools in the hope, as he said, “that one or other on ’em would turn out a Classical Scholar. We want a Classical Scholar in our business, one as really knows what’s what. I’ve lost thousands o’ pounds in my time through being only an amatoor and having to mug it all up for myself.

“Look at our Schliemann. His eddication, what with Eton and what with Oxford, has cost me a matter o’ two thousand eight hundred pound. And what ’ave Eton and Oxford taught ’im? Nothing that’s worth knowin’—but a lot that isn’t. He’d ha’ got a much better eddication in a Board School. ‘Now Schlie, my lad,’ I says, when I sent him to Oxford, ‘go in strong for Greek Archæology, and I’ll make you a partner when you’re twenty-five.’ Well, he studied Greek Archæology for three years—at least he pretended to—and when he’d done, blest if he knew the difference between a Tanagra figure and an Egyptian god! Of course he’d never done a stroke o’ work, and when I taxed him with it he had the impudence to say as he’d been ‘rottin’ the whole time he was there. That’s what most of them do, as far as I can judge. It costs you four or five hundred a year, and all they learn is to waste their time, and stick their ’ands in their pockets, and smoke cigarettes—and then you have to pay their debts. And what are you to do with ’em when they

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come out? They'd spoil any business you put 'em to. Leave 'em my money? Not *me*. It'll all go to public objects when my old woman's done with it and the gels has been provided for. And to think that ignorant Johnnies like them should be ashamed of their own father—for that's what they are. And they'll be a bit more ashamed when they read my will!

"I'd give a thousand pounds down to any man as would take our Schlie and make him work steady for twelve months—no matter what—shovelin' coals if you like. Three months in jail 'ud do him no harm—blest if it would. I've given him chance after chance. Last spring I put him on a Buryin' Party as I was sending out with a big stock o' antiques to the Isles of Greece. They hadn't been there a week before I got a telegram from the foreman to say as Schlie was in trouble at Ithaca; he'd been foolin' about with a pistol among the natives, and I can tell you that if our firm hadn't had a pull on the Greek Government they'd ha' hanged him there and then. Last news was as he was in Asia Minor—somewhere back o' Smyrna. We've not heard from him for five months. P'raps the brigands have nabbed him. If they have they can keep him for me—and I wish 'em luck. It's enough to break a father's 'eart. If it wasn't that my business kep' me cheerful I'd go and drown myself—that I would."

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The firm of Rodright & Co., Limited, is still in existence; but I have heard that the character of its business has been considerably changed. On the old man's death it passed under the direction of his two daughters, Ann and Jane. Clever as these women were, they yet lacked the qualities which had been essential to the father's success, namely, a poetic imagination and a sense of humour. On his death-bed he had given them certain counsels, of which the chief was: "There's big money in jokes, my dears. Take the business with a light 'eart, but attend to the thinkin'." The last part of this injunction Ann and Jane were fully competent to carry out; but the first part fell on barren soil. They took it all too seriously; and the consequence was that when they fell under the influence of a certain noble-minded ecclesiastic in those parts, their hearts not only lost their lightness but sank altogether. The prick of conscience grew active and intolerable. Hence it has come to pass that the goods now supplied by Rodright & Co. are thoroughly genuine. The great factory has become the central emporium for antiques of indisputable authenticity.

But a curious thing has happened. The production of the celebrated "fakes" having ceased altogether, these fakes have themselves passed into the category of antiques, with the result that the prices of all articles marked with three dots are greatly

enhanced. In all other respects the profits of the firm have declined.

Collectors of genuine "Rodrights" have now, indeed, become numerous, and the bidding at sales for offered specimens is always brisk. The vogue had its origin, I think, among American millionaires, and several famous collections already exist in that country. Since the advent into the market of Mr. Cyrus K. Plentibutton, the great sausage-king of Chicago, the available supply has almost disappeared. Plentibutton's agents attend all the sales, outbidding everybody, and even invade private houses in quest of the coveted treasures. One of these gentlemen recently offered a friend of mine five hundred pounds for a lovely Tanagra figure which Rodright allowed my friend to put in his pocket when inspecting his "Works," assuring him that the cost of production was exactly sevenpence-halfpenny. My friend tells me that he is holding for a higher price. And the fair reader will not have forgotten that Miss Cora Plentibutton, recently married to the Duke of Stonehenge, was arrayed at the wedding in a magnificent bridal veil of Old Venetian lace, "by Rodright"—the gift of the Dowager Duchess. Since this announcement was made in the Press the prices of Rodright lace, and indeed of all his productions, have gone up by leaps and bounds; and an instance is on record of a piece of Rodright "Venetian" being put up to auction and fetching nearly double

the price of the original from which it had been copied, sold some months earlier by the same auctioneers. I have heard it whispered, and can well believe the truth of the rumour, that a firm of German Jews in New York has already commenced the manufacture of spurious "Rodrights," and the alleged specimens of their work which I have seen are certainly promising. And others no doubt will follow.

Indeed, as we reflect upon these things, it is as though we were standing in a Hall of Mirrors and gazing upon imaged images repeated to all infinity. They fill the vistas of the future; and do they not also fill the vistas of the past? And here I cannot refrain from quoting a remark made to me by a philosophic friend to whom I had appealed for light on the deeper significance of Rodright's enterprise. "Rodright," he said to me, "is the name not merely of an historical person, but of an Eternal Principle."

Nor must I omit from this record the tribute paid to Rodright's thoroughness by a French writer on Numismatics. The works of this famous savant stood, with many others of the same class, on the bookshelves in Rodright's inner office; and it was said by experts that his Italian designer must have made a free use of the Frenchman's illustrations in the fabrication of his dies. The savant, on some specimens of the Rodright coins being submitted to him, confirmed the suspicions of the English experts, especially in regard to the coinage of Alexander the

MADE OUT OF NOTHING

Great; he said they were undoubtedly copied from his own book, but added that the Rodright imitations, on minute comparison, were in no respect inferior to the superb originals from which he had taken the photographic reproductions shown in the text of his work. No wonder; for if you will place one of the original coins under a powerful microscope, you will find the Three Dots, faintly discernible in the proper place. Which things seem to be a parable.

*The following
pages contain
announcements
and descriptions
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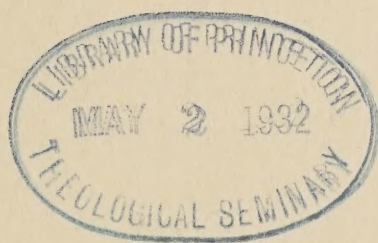
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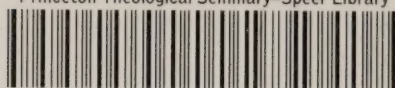




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